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FEATURED IN THIS ISSUE OF RETRO GAMER

METAL SLUG
THE DEFINITIVE LOWDOWN ON SNK'S CLASSIC RUN-AND-GUN FRANCHISE

DYNAMITE DAN
HOW A BEDROOM CODER DARED TO TAKE ON THE MIGHTY JET SET WILLY

DMA DESIGN
FROM LEMMINGS TO GTA – THE COMPLETE UNTOLD STORY

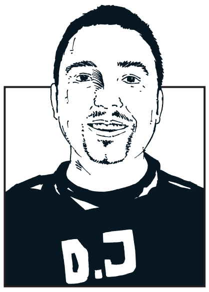
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THE RETROBATES

WHAT'S YOUR FAVOURITE DMA DESIGN GAME?



DARRAN JONES

Easily *Space Station Silicon Valley*. Amazingly quirky and with great puzzles, there was nothing else like it on the N64. Fantastic stuff.
Expertise: Juggling a wife, two children and **Retro Gamer**
Currently playing: *Street Fighter IV*
Favourite game of all time:
Robotron: 2084



ASHLEY DAY

How could I pick anything other than *Lemmings*? It was a revelation when it was released and I still believe that it's yet to be surpassed. The amazing pixel art, the puzzles… *Lemmings* is as close to perfect as it gets.
Expertise: The games of Team 17, MSX, Sega's *Shining Force* series
Currently playing:
Street Fighter IV
Favourite game of all time:
Shining Force III



STUART HUNT

Body Harvest. Unloved by many, it's a fantastic spin on *GTA*, but ups the ante by adding giant space bugs. How on earth could you not like that?
Expertise:
Games with flying bits in them
Currently playing:
Street Fighter IV
Favourite game of all time:
Street Fighter IV



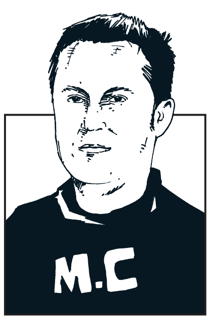
CRAIG GRANNELL

The one in my fevered dreams where unicycling lemmings yell "Oh no!" while rampaging around a massive city, partaking in all manner of crimes. Or, er, just *Lemmings*.
Expertise:
Games you don't need 37 fingers to control
Currently playing:
Centipede on iPhone
Favourite game of all time:
H.E.R.O.



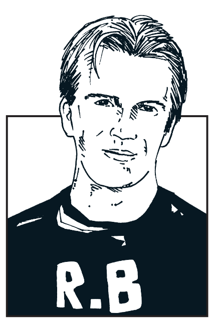
PAUL DRURY

I always had a soft spot for the first *Grand Theft Auto*, as it reminded me of *Siren City* on the Commodore 64, but the only sensible answer is the third iteration. Liberty and the pursuit of gaming happiness…
Expertise: Getting old programmers to confess their drug habits
Currently playing:
Revenge Of The Mutant Camels
Favourite game of all time:
Sheep In Space



MARTYN CARROLL

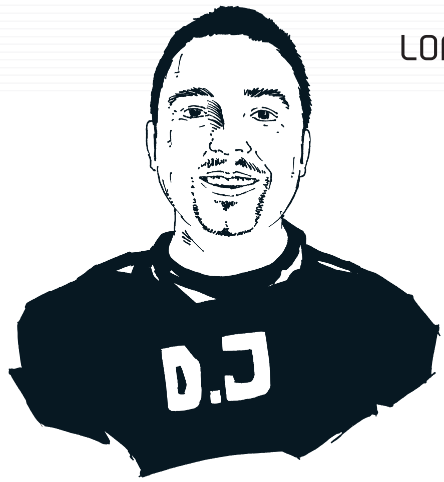
Does Rockstar North stuff count? If so, it has to be *GTA IV* – I'm still discovering new things to see and destroy in Liberty City. If not, I'll go with its brilliant forebear, *GTA III*.
Expertise: Splatter movies
Currently playing:
GTA IV: The Lost And Damned
Favourite game of all time:
Jet Set Willy



RICHARD BURTON

It has to be *Lemmings*. Insanely cute, devilishly designed and it has some of the cutest music to ever emit from the Commodore Amiga.
Expertise: Stuff, nonsense, things and *Pingu*
Currently playing:
Astro Wars
Favourite game of all time:
Manic Miner

LOADING...



This month we're celebrating the brilliance of Sega's Mega Drive, a machine that, along with NEC's PC-Engine, was finally able to break the vice-like grip that Nintendo had on the console-gaming scene at the time.

What's interesting about the Mega Drive is that, while Sega was able to get everything so right with the machine, the same didn't hold true for its later consoles. In many ways the Mega Drive was the beginning of the end for Sega, mainly because the company's later hardware efforts (despite being mostly brilliant) never achieved anywhere near the same success that its 16-bit wonder machine was able to achieve.

Of course, the company is still capable of making fantastic games – just look at the amazingness that is *OutRun 2* – but I bet I'm not the only gamer wishing for a Dreamcast 2 along with *Shenmue III*, *Streets Of Rage 4* and *Panzer Dragoon Saga 2* to play on it.

Still, this isn't a time for glumness, it's a time for celebration, so hurry on over to page 26 so you can crash the party. We'll see you there.

Enjoy the magazine





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» Load 62 Breathing new life into classic games

FEATURED

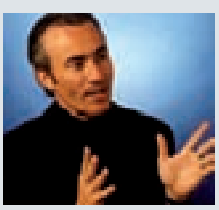
RETRO REVIVALS

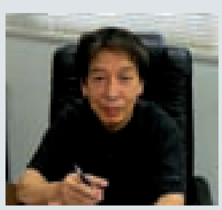


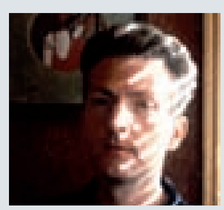




This month we've been chatting to...







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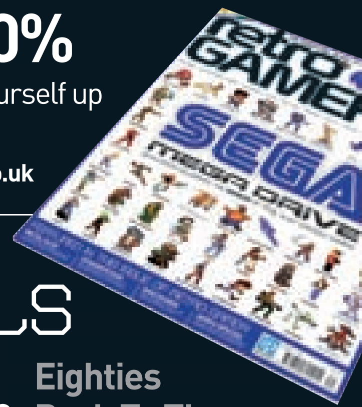


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> "It looks great and scoring is brilliantly satisfying"

Stuart Hunt



66 THE CLASSIC GAME

Discover why Data East's *Windjammers* is the best frisbee game of all time

68 THE DEFINITIVE METAL SLUG

Stuart Campbell reports on SNK's hardcore run-'n'-gun series



ESSENTIALS

RETRO RATED

retro GAMER.net READER'S REVIVAL



24 ZOMBIE, ZOMBIE

Regular reader Ian Marks confesses his love/hate relationship with Quicksilva's isometric adventure.





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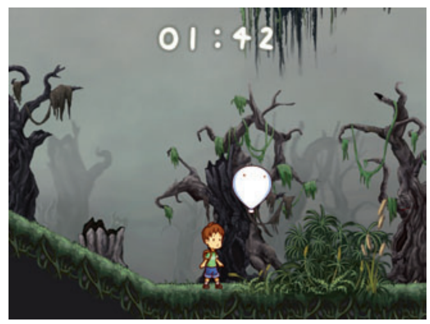
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» (Above) We love the new art style of *A Boy and His Blob*. Let's hope the gameplay is just as good.
» (Right) Feed your blob different jellybeans and he'll be able to morph into all sorts of useful shapes.



THE BLOB IS BACK

A BOY AND HIS BLOB SEQUEL COMES TO WII

Released on the NES in 1989, *A Boy And His Blob* was a side-scrolling puzzle game that was created by the fertile brain of David Crane. It centred on a young boy whose best friend in the world was a white, jellybean-chomping blob – similar in look and powers to the cartoon character Shmoo. Through the feeding of different flavoured jellybeans to the Blob (whose full name is Blobert), the pasty globule could morph into a variety of different objects to help the pair get out of danger. Progression in the game basically relied on the player solving fiendish puzzles by chucking the correct flavoured jellybeans into Blobs' gob. And while these puzzles had a tendency to teeter precariously on the cusp of chance much of the time, the wonderful cartoon graphics and comical relationship between the dysfunctional pair is where the game found its charm.

Well a DS sequel, courtesy of Majesco (who is also publishing this new Wii release), was in the works for some time. And while we'll admit we weren't instantly bowled over by the gaudy look of the handheld sequel, it did pique our curiosity. Sadly, though, our curiosities weren't snuffed up when it was announced last year that Majesco were cancelling the project.

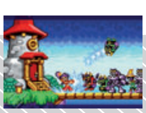
Well, after an extremely long twenty-year hiatus from the videogame circuit, the duo is finally set to be making a comeback on the Wii, hurrah! While we're certainly excited at the prospect of seeing the Blob bound back onto our screens, what has us even more excited about the game is the company developing it: WayForward Technologies (the team behind the brilliant DS shooter *Contra 4*). After being dutifully impressed with its handling of the *Contra* franchise last year, we put the studio down as one of the developers to keep our beady eye on this year – so we're really hoping the chaps can deliver the same level of magic this time round. So what do we actually know about the new *A Boy And His Blob* game? Well, from the look of these early screenshots, WayForward is incorporating a stunning fresh look to the game and it's likely there will be a few more flavoured jellybeans to feed Blob as well. The game is going to be more a re-imagining of the NES classic than an out-and-out sequel, with a story that shares the same premise as the original *A Boy And His Blob* game.

> **"WayForward is incorporating a stunning fresh look to the game"**

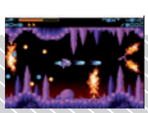
Gui Karyo, who is the executive vice president of operations at Majesco Entertainment – the company that's publishing the game – had this to say about reviving the much-loved classic: "When *A Boy And His Blob* first appeared in 1989, it captured the imagination of gamers everywhere with its heartwarming storyline and unique gameplay," said Karyo. "Twenty years later, we are proud to bring an updated – yet still charming – re-imagining of this beloved title to a new generation of Wii players."

We think that the sequel is shaping up very nicely, with the dreamy aesthetics of the game and the fresh new look of the two lead characters looking almost good enough to eat.

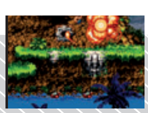
A WayForward discography



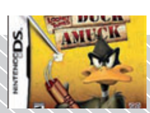
SHANTAE
Year Released: 2002
Version: GBC



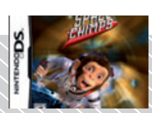
SIGMA STAR SAGA
Year Released: 2006
Version: GBA



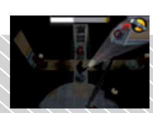
CONTRA 4
Year Released: 2007
Version: DS



LOONEY TUNES: DUCK AMUCK
Year Released: 2007
Version: DS



SPACE CHIMPS
Year Released: 2008
Version: DS



LIT
Year Released: 2009
Version: Wii

EVERYTHING MUST JACK-GO





» Jackson struts his stuff in the *Moonwalker* arcade game, which weirdly doesn't feature in his collection.



» Jackson's full-sized Darth Vader, which was constructed entirely out of Lego. Just don't leave it near the kids…

MICHAEL JACKSON AUCTIONS OFF HIS ARCADE COLLECTION

Michael Jackson is about to have the biggest spring clear-out since records begun. From rare and expensive works of 19th Century art, to a man-sized Darth Vader constructed entirely of Lego, Jackson is auctioning off a wealth of bizarre and collectable possessions from his Neverland Ranch – including the decorative looking Neverland gates.

So why are we covering the story inside the pages Retro Gamer, you cry? Well, included in the auction is the star's entire collection of arcade machines and game consoles, and being one of the biggest celebrities on the planet during the 80s and 90s, the self proclaimed king of pop has acquired quite a collection; one that would effortlessly moonwalk its way into the pages of *Collectors Corner.*

While we did find the lack of the *Moonwalker* arcade game from his collection a little curious, gaming lots that had us turning greener than Peter Pan's tunic were pristine coin-ops of *Karate Champ*, *Donkey Kong*, *Crystal Castles* and *Dig Dug*, the colossal six-player version of the *X-Men* arcade machine, and a rare Sega *R-360 Flight Simulation* arcade cabinet, to name but a few.

More than 2,000 of Michael Jackson's personal items are being auctioned off over a live five-day auction, from 22-25 April, and a portion of the money raised by the event is going to the MusiCares charity. If you fancy owning one of Michael Jackson's coin-ops, or even one of his iconic diamond-studded gloves, then a full list of the items that will be going under the hammer can be found at www.juliensauctions.com.

AWESOME ARCADES

HERE'S THREE LOTS THAT CAUGHT OUR EYE, AND HAD WE ENOUGH CASH AND WERE TO BE IN THE BEVERLY HILLS AREA AROUND THE 22 APRIL, WE MAY WELL HAVE HAD A PUNT.



X-MEN (6 PLAYER)

Konami's side scrolling arcade classic is a worthy addition to any arcade collection, and the fact it's the six-player version makes it even more desirable. Playing six members of Marvel's super mutant team, the game had you fighting a bevy of sentinels and super villains ripped straight from the pages of the popular comic book series.



KARATE CHAMP

The grandmaster, the sensei, the wise old beat 'em up the other cabs daren't eyeball for fear of being crushed by its twin stick-style, it can only be Data East's *Karate Champ*, the inaugural one-on-one brawler that started it all. What surprises us most about this particular item is the immaculate condition of the cab; it looks as fresh as a proverbial daisy.



SEGA R-360 FLIGHT SIMULATOR

It might resemble a giant sandwich maker, but Sega's *R-360* was a menacing looking arcade simulator that simulated the sensation of being inside a fighter plane (apparently). The game looks terribly ambitious, very heavy, and as a result is quite rare and pricey. While we've never had the opportunity to sit in one, we certainly wouldn't pass up the chance.

RETROVISION 2009

PAUL DRURY JOINED THE HAPPY HERD AT LAST MONTH'S RETROVISION EVENT. FORUM NAMES HAVE BEEN USED TO PROTECT THE GUILTY…



»The rousing *World Tour* finale on Saturday night. More cowbell!

"It's the people," beams Beerman, when asked what makes this gathering of gamers and Llamasoft lovers so unique. "I just feel like I fit in." We note that he's dressed in a full Lycra body suit, outlaw mask, has beer bottles strapped around his ample frame and has just been play-fighting with a giraffe.

RetroVision, now in its seventh year and settled in its spiritual home of Oxford's Folly Bridge Inn, isn't like other retro events. Yes, there are games aplenty – from retro delights on the *Vectrex* to the finger-waggling fun of *Let's Tap* on the Wii. Jeff Minter's esoteric output mingles with *OutRun's* magical shower, the old school sounds and pixels blinking in the dark recalling the arcades of yore.

There are stars, too, with Saturday night culminating in an acoustic gig from 6502 Reloaded, a coding super-group comprising Jon 'Sensible' Hare on guitar, Jeremy 'Bullfrog' Longley on bass and fronted by lovable minstrel Ben Daglish. He leads spirited renditions of classic game tunes, including Rob Hubbard's *Spellbound* and his own *Deflektor*, switching between flute, ukulele and penny whistle. The man puts the 'mentalist' into multi-instrumentalist, we tell you.

What strikes you as different about RV, though, is the camaraderie. Each visitor is greeted warmly by organiser Mark Rayson and everywhere old friends are getting re-acquainted over drinks and *Defender*. People make an effort, some braving severe snow or British Airways to be part of the throng. A bearded bloke called Bog has flown back from LA for the occasion, apparently motivated by a desire to lick all other attendees, and Limb Clock has travelled all the way from Finland with an equally salacious mission. "I've promised to do a level of flaming cocks in *Little Big Planet*," he explains. "Score balls will fall from the sky, though building the multiplier will be difficult." But then we all know multipliers are easier with female organs…



»Vintage Matt and Markie – the perfect hosts…



»Jon Hare shows some sensible strumming.

This is a crowd that wants to play its part. Some have brought kit or donated old consoles as raffle prizes. Others have dressed up: Vintage Matt slips on a Nintendo Power Glove and officiates the high-score competitions, as Joss Wheedon's Dr Horrible and Ace Attorney Phoenix Wright wanders through the bar with an 'Objection!' speech bubble, much to the bemusement of the locals. A couple have even created games especially for the show. The aforementioned Beerman showcases his storming '*Sinistar* on a farm' homebrew offering, Sheep Snaggers, and LamptonWorm grins broadly as folk push the scores on his simply wonderful Lazer Grazer to new heights.

"We're almost a club event," enthuses Rayson, flashing a grin from beneath his Ming-style fluorescent green face paint. "It's a community thing. Getting together to drink, play games and have a blast."

He and his RV team are already planning 2010's event and extend the invite to **RG** readers. "They've always supported us, bless 'em, and we shall hug each and every one of them that turns up next year." Did you need any more encouragement?

Thanks to Markie, WiteWulf, Mayhem and PsychoRob for the photos and Merman for the set-list.



»"And that's why they call him Sackboy…" Limb Clock explains his *LBP* level design logic.



»They came to play. And drink.



»Sustained!

HIGHLIGHTS

THE BAND
A stirring performance of game tunes from this amiable bunch of industry legends. Jon and Jeremy proved their fingers aren't just adept at coding and the exuberance of Ben Daglish at the helm made this a memorable show. You haven't lived until you've heard Hubbard's *Rasputin* played on the penny whistle.

THE HOMEBREW
The *Sinistar* inspired Sheep Snaggers (see what he did with that title?) and the twitchy, hugely addictive Lazer Grazer gave everyone something new to get their hooves on. These are two excellent bespoke offerings, which you can download from **www.beercave.co.uk** and **www.lamptonworm.com** respectively.

THE COSTUMES
Cosplay seems to be a growing feature of RetroVision and certainly contributes to the party-cum-convention feel. Phoenix Wright's impressive quiff turned heads and the sight of a Space Giraffe ordering something from the top shelf craned necks, too.

THE GAME COMPETITIONS
The atmosphere might be convivial, but the game competitions at RV added a little friendly rivalry. Tyke triumphed on *Rambo III* on the Megadrive and the hard fought contest on VCS *Space Invaders* saw Starship Command take the trophy. **RG** bagged third place on *Lazer Zone*. Out of three. We blame the joystick.

RETRO* GAMER DIARY

THINGS TO LOOK FORWARD TO...

EVENT HOSTING RETRO* GAMER

IF YOU WANT **RETRO GAMER** TO PROMOTE UPCOMING GAMES AND EVENTS, CONTACT US AT RETROGAMER@IMAGINE-PUBLISHING.CO.UK

Just because **Retro Gamer** looks to the past doesn't mean there aren't plenty of games and events to look forward to in the future. Every month we list all the exciting games and events for you to add to your 'to do' list



MARCH

LEISURE SUIT LARRY: BOX OFFICE BUST

Released: 27 March

Publisher: Sierra

Price: £29.99 - £49.99

Format: Xbox 360, PS3, PC

We were disappointed with *Magna Cum Laude* so we're hoping that the incoming *Box Office Bust* has more in common with the original games. Despite having a rude title, *Magna Cum Laude* just didn't feel as racy as Larry's earlier outings, so we're really hoping that Sierra has upped the smut levels for *Box Office Bust* and delivers something that's far naughtier.



APRIL

SAM & MAX: EPISODE 2

Released: 24 April

Publisher: Atari

Price: £29.99

Format: Wii

Although we didn't get around to reviewing *Episode One* of *Sam & Max*, we did manage to play it out of hours and were very pleased with the end results. *Season 2* is effectively a compilation of the PC episodes and has once again been tailor-made to make use of the Wii's unique control system. It's also gut-bustingly funny to boot, so expect a review very, very soon.



MAY

POKÉMON PLATINUM

Released: 22 May

Publisher: Nintendo

Price: £29.99

Format: NDS

Listen carefully. Can you hear it? That's the sound of Nintendo's biggest gaming juggernaut heading to the DS. Selling a ridiculous 1 million units during its first two days in Japan, *Platinum* follows on from *Diamond* and *Pearl* but includes plenty of new features and extras. Basically if you're a fan of Nintendo's Pocket Monsters then the 22 May won't come quickly enough.



MAY

VIRTUA TENNIS 2009

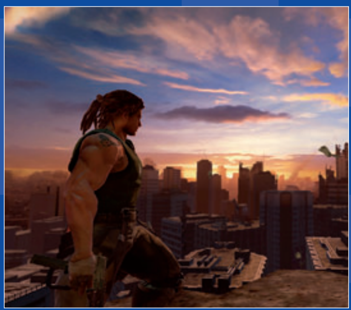
Released: 29 May

Publisher: Sega

Price: £29.99 - £49.99

Format: Xbox 360, PS3, PC

Realising that *Virtua Tennis 4* would sound like the franchise was getting a little long in the tooth, Sega has done an EA and added 2009 to the end of its latest game. Sega has promised that many of the classic mini-games of old will be returning in this latest update, along with plenty of new ones. Let's just hope Sega isn't tempted to mess around with the series' sublime controls.



MAY

BIONIC COMMANDO

Released: 29 May

Publisher: Capcom

Price: £34.99 - £49.99

Format: Xbox 360, PS3, PC

Another title that's slipped until April. Normally this could mean the kiss of death, but we're wondering if this is a purposeful move by Capcom to move it away from both *Street Fighter IV* and *Resident Evil 5*. We've not heard rumblings of any difficulties on GRIN's part, so we're hoping that this is just a tactical move from Capcom to allow the game a chance to breathe. Expect a review very soon.



JUNE

THE SIMS 3

Released: 06 June

Publisher: Electronic Arts

Price: £34.99

Format: PC

Now nearly a decade old, *The Sims* is one of the most popular franchises of all time, with its sequel still proving incredibly popular some five years after its original release. EA promises that the next step for the series is far greater interaction, more in-depth personalities and far better synching with other lots thanks to its new neighbourhood exploration mode. Looks like we're going to get a chance to re-create the Retro Gamer offices again.



JUNE

WOLFENSTEIN

Released: 26 June

Publisher: Activision

Price: £34.99 - £49.99

Format: Xbox 360, PS3, PC

Depending on who you speak to, *Wolfenstein 3D* is widely responsible for kickstarting the genre now known as the first-person shooter. It also happened to be one of the best FPSs on the original Xbox that didn't have *Halo* in its main title. Raven Software, Endrant Studios and Activision are all working closely to ensure that it captures the spirit of the original games, but can still forge a name for itself among heavy competition.



JUNE

RYGAR: THE BATTLE OF ARGUS

Released: 26 June

Publisher: Tecmo

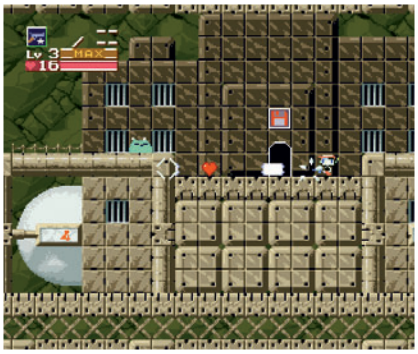
Price: £29.99

Format: Wii

We're in two minds about *The Battle of Argus*. While we're obviously pleased that a classic retro hero is getting dusted down for a new generation of gamers, it's rather disappointing that this is just a port of the (admittedly fine) PS2 game. While the visuals don't appear to have that much of an overhaul, Tecmo is promising that it's all about the new controls. We'll all find out soon enough.

MAILBAG

HAVE YOUR SAY… SEND US A LETTER OR MAKE YOURSELF HEARD ON THE ONLINE FORUM – **WWW.RETROGAMER.NET**



Andreas wants to see more new games like *Cave Story* in the magazine, but what does everyone else think?

WHERE'S THE INDIE LOVE?

Hello you good folks,

Let me start by saying your last issue was an absolute corker, a porker of an issue stuffed with retro wonderfulness! Now let me get down to business…

I've been a reader of your magazine now for about two years, and eagerly awaited the promised expansion of the homebrew section. I waited, read promises and waited some more.

Then it arrived and I think it's great – these new old-games and their creators deserve the coverage and support they get for keeping the retro game market fresh and alive with new ideas, games, home-grown sequels and homages, and even the sometimes unnecessary, but often great, remakes.

The thing is though, it is mostly coverage of new games for old systems. Where are the independently developed, (mostly) free games which are not for the C64 or Speccie? Games like *Cave Story*, *Tormishire*, *Aquaria* and *Noitu Love 2*? You could fill an entire issue with the amount of excellent shoot-'em-ups out there ready to be downloaded by everyone (Shoot The Core is a great place to look). I know you've reviewed and praised *La Mulana* before, but an actual 'making of' would make my month! Surely it would also be easier to track down and interview a lot of these bedroom coders without all the red tape to get through? An article on the games of Ikiki (check out super-hard naked ninja platformer *Nikujin*!) or Pixl or the best homebrew shooters out there would spread a lot of love and fun!

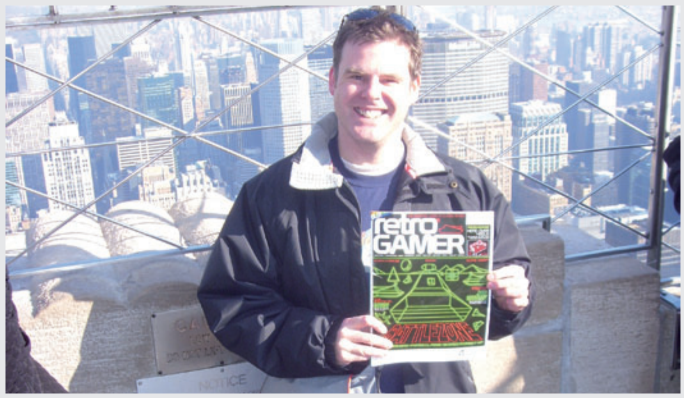
I just think there are some great games out there that my fellow good readers should know about and I would love to read more about them. Anyways, thanks for the hard work and the great mag.

Andreas Polyviou (aka Jumpbutton)

Glad you like the new homebrew section Andreas. And judging by the comments we've had you're not the only one either. We have no problem covering further homebrew in the magazine, and may even do making ofs (*Cave Story* would be a personal favourite of Darran's). We'll start doing a bit of research and see what we can come up with. Bear in mind though that not everyone likes homebrew as much as yourself, so we'll try to keep everybody happy.

STAR LETTER

NEW YORK, NEW YORK



Luis and his copy of Retro Gamer; the perfect fusion of man and magazine.

Hello Retro Gamer!

Here's a picture of me on top of the Empire State Building with a copy of Retro Gamer. The locals were somewhat bemused by my pose, but thought the magazine was great (one also offered a huge sum of money for my Nintendo bag!).

I've been reading RG since Issue #1 and will continue to do so for many years to come (I hope). It's great to be reminded of some of the games that caused so many arguments in the playground (Horace was NOT better than Dizzy) and the interviews with the very guys who built home computing are totally absorbing. I can't wait for the next fix.

Keep up the good work and say 'hello' to my girlfriend, Sarah, who suffered the indignity of having to photograph me, and Retro Gamer, in front of over 200 people on a cold, windy day in the Big Apple.

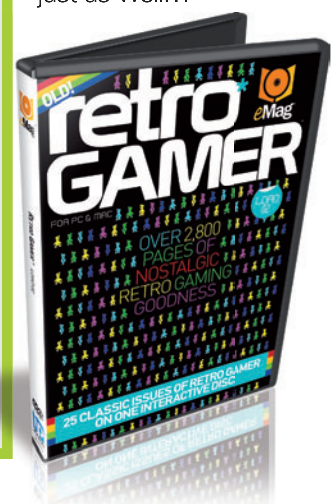
Regards

Luis Ogando via email

We're always pleased when people spread the word of RG – but next time, Luis, could you maybe have it projected from one of the billboards in Times Square? In the meantime enjoy your star prize for taking a photo of the magazine at the highest altitude we've seen.

WIN!

Every month, one lucky reader will receive a copy of our brand new eMag, **Retro Gamer Load 2**, a bargain if ever there was one. All you have to do is present a lucid, thought-provoking piece of literature that melts our souls. Failing that, something funny with swear words or something *Strider*-related will go down just as well…



REVIVE RETRO ARCADES

Dear Retro Gamer,

I really enjoy your magazine and website and



Neil Brown is looking for *Double Dragon*. If anyone has the arcade version that they want to sell then please get in touch with us.



CONTACT US

Snail Mail: Retro Gamer, Imagine Publishing, Richmond House, 33 Richmond Hill, Bournemouth, Dorset, BH2 6EZ

Email: retrogamer@imagine-publishing.co.uk



Next month: Archer Maclean

>> BURNING QUESTION?

HAVE YOU ever had a burning question that you've always wanted to ask? Do you often sit at your computer desk wondering if David Braben will ever patch things up with Ian Bell, or if Matthew Smith checks into hotels as Miner Willy? If you do, then head on over to our forum where you can put your burning questions to whoever we're interviewing. The best questions will then get answered and revealed in the next issue. Visit the forum now at www.retrogamer.net/forum

am an avid retro gamer (although my Mega Drive is sadly broken at the moment). I have two quick questions that I don't seem to be able to find answers to, despite spending considerable time on the net:

1. Is there anywhere in London that I can play retro arcade machines? I like the look of **www.arcadebarn.co.uk,** but it's too far from London to go on a regular basis (although I do plan to go sometime soon).

2. I'm looking to buy a retro arcade machine and I'm particularly interested in *Street Fighter 2* or *Double Dragon*. Can you recommend a good, simple, reliable website to buy from?

Sorry to be a pain, but any info you can give me would be very much appreciated and would do a little bit to keep retro gaming alive and well! You do a great job of that anyway so thank for producing a great magazine that is a must-buy in my house!

Yours sincerely,

Neil Brown via email

If you're near the Thames then the Namco Station is a good place to head to. You won't find really old titles (although Darran remembers playing *Pac-Man* last time he visited it), but there's still a pleasing range of machines that cover a wide range of genres. Another option is the Trocadero, which has a huge range of arcade games – especially beat-'em-ups like *Street Fighter IV*. As for your second query, your best bet is probably going to be eBay. On the other hand we've had success by phoning closed-down arcades, as they tend to simply throw older games away.

> "Another option is the Trocadero, which has a huge range of arcade games"

RETROBATE PROFILE

Retrobate Profile



Name:	Craig Green
Joined:	27th Jul 2008
Location:	Not given
Occupation:	Not given
Website	http://www.retrozold.net
Fav Games System:	Sega Mega Drive



>> Think *Gauntlet* in space and you'll have a good idea why *Alien Syndrome* remains so popular.

I'M FAMOUS!

Dear Retro Gamer,

Yesterday afternoon I picked up a copy of the latest Retro Gamer, and much to my surprise I saw a screenshot of my own Retrobate profile staring up at me from the bottom of page 13. I found it very odd considering I hadn't actually written anything for the Mailbag. I flipped through but, alas, could see no reason for its inclusion. I'd like to say a big thank you for the publicity, but I can't help but feel that I don't really deserve it. Still, perhaps it'll steer a few more people in the direction of my DOS game profiles, which you are of course more than welcome to include for the next Reader's Revival, or any up-coming ones for that matter! May I recommend Blood?

Yours sincerely,

Duncan Rule (crudux_cruo)

Don't worry Duncan there's no big conspiracy, we just choose readers whose profiles we've enjoyed reading. We don't tend to tell them beforehand as we feel it makes for a nice little surprise!

ALIEN ISSUES

Hi Darran,

Have you ever considered producing a 'making of' piece on the Sega arcade game *Alien Syndrome*? I only ask because it's one of my favourite games of all time. I even have five original JAMMA boards, which I suppose may be seen as a little bit excessive.

If you do decide to produce such an article I'd appreciate it if you would minimize discussion of the offensive version that was recently produced for the Wii and PSP. It is, in my opinion, an absolute insult.

Thanks for your time.

Regards,

Ian Maw (new subscriber)

BEAT THE TEAM

Think you're good at retro games? Then see if you can beat the staff at some of their favourite games



DARRAN

CHOSEN GAME: ROD-LAND

Why I picked it: Last month's coverage brought back some nice memories. **Handy advice:** Collect all the flowers whenever possible.



High-Score: 92,250



STUART

CHOSEN GAME: CHUCKIE EGG

Why I picked it: It's just a great little platformer and I absolutely adore the BBC version.

Handy advice: Make sure you pick up all the seeds as it's the only thing the birds go for.



High-Score: 12,050



CRAIG

CHOSEN GAME: CALIFORNIA GAMES

Why I picked it: Probably dreaming of holidays, due to the dreary grey weather outside the window.

Handy Advice: Mix your routine, including jumps and cutbacks, and spend plenty of time in the tube.



High-Score: 9.6

From the forum

» To have your say visit www.retrogamer.net/forum

Every month, **Retro Gamer** asks a question on the forum and prints the best replies. This month we wanted to know...

What's your favourite Mega Drive game?

ID: thl
Probably *Space Harrier*. It's the immersive graphic that had me glued to the screen for all that time. Having to come across creatures such as the flying dragon, one-eyed mammoths and robots with weird names, they're going to get wiped out!

ID: craigritchie
As the name suggests, this really is the ultimate collection, and I've sunk countless hours into a host of those titles, with *Ecco The Dolphin*, *Dr Robotnik's Mean Bean Machine* and *Streets Of Rage II* all worthy of honourable mentions. If pushed for one favourite from that list, however, it would have to be *Phantasy Star IV*... true console RPG brilliance that took up a hell of a lot of my time in 1998 (I know, I picked it up pretty late. In fact, I was roving around Motavia at a time when most people were already done with *Final Fantasy 7*).

ID: timothy lumsden
Ristar by a country mile – he's the playable Sonic who's not annoying!!

ID: TMR
I'd have said *Space Harrier* but I didn't really like the Megadrive version (the 32X one on the other hand is class)... so I'll go with *Mean Bean Machine* because that's the one I've played and enjoyed the most.

ID: The_Hawk
Is this not about the 20th time Sega has released a similar compilation? Is *Gain Ground* on there again? If so I'll pick that, as I love that game. In fact I'm off to play it on one of the other 19 versions I have.

ID: Fred83
Alien Storm. Is it me or anyone else think the man player looked like Elvis?

ID: Spooky
It's a tie between the arcade versions of *Shinobi* and *Altered Beast*, for nostalgic reasons only...
But since I've only managed to complete *Altered Beast*, it's officially my favourite!

ID: dunjohn
Well, the lock-on versions are absent from this collection, but *Sonic & Knuckles* still gets the nod from me.

ID: rinoa
I haven't purchased this one yet, but do have the PSP version - *Ristar* was by far my favourite game on that. I think maybe only the *Streets Of Rage* games could top it on the new version.

ID: haventgottaclue
I'd say *Fantasy Zone* on the basis of the Master System version, but I haven't actually played the arcade version, which is included in this pack.

ID: muralbat
The whole collection is fantastic and a great addition to my PS3 collection. But the game that's going to get more playtime than is good for me is *Vectorman*. There's just something about the animation and art style that just grips me! Or maybe it's just the fact it's a fantastic game that still holds up well against most games today?

ID: imparks
To be fair I can't see anything there that hasn't been on countless compilations before. I can't really see the point. Any true Mega Drive retro fan will surely either have the originals, the illegal roms, or a previous PS2 etc compilation. Don't get me wrong, there's a lot of great retro joy there, but I won't be buying it.

ID: Team Alfie
For some strange reason I seem to have drawn myself to *Streets Of Rage* as far as actually playing the collection goes, even though I could actually be playing the sequels instead.

ID: yethboth
Golden Axe 2. This has got to be the best Mega Drive *Golden Axe* sequel with a fantastic soundtrack.

ID: smurph
Sonic 2 for me, a brilliant sequel, and the best *Sonic* game ever in my opinion – as long as I play as Sonic alone, so that idiot Tails doesn't lose all my rings in the bonus stage.

ID: TheDude18
Comix Zone - a game I discovered only last year. Very original and entertaining!

ID: NonShinyGoose
Dynamite Headdy – another slice of Treasure brilliance, and this time with various movie puns ("Terminate Her Too!") and plenty of hidden stuff to find. Can you find the cow that doesn't go moo?

ID: Greyfox
I was very disappointed with this one... but for me it would have to be *Comic Zone* and the *Streets Of Rage* series. The rest are just fillers really...

YOUR OPINION PLEASE!

STUPID ACHIEVEMENTS

sscott Trophies and achievements appear to divide opinion on this forum. But which trophy or achievement has made you think "THAT'S IMPOSSIBLE!" or "SOD THAT!"? For me it has to be completing *Dead Space* with one gun (plasma cutter).

Sureshot Actually, the most ridiculous ones I've seen (which are really unlocks) are some of those on *Super Smash Bros. Brawl*, like clearing All-Star mode on Intense difficulty and so on.

gmintyfresh *Quake 2*, nine achievements with a total of 0 points. The bonus disc from *Quake 4* has *Quake 2* in all its glory; the achievements have 0 points!

Nemesis2K *F.E.A.R.* - Complete the game without dying. Any achievements in *DOAXBV2*. *Fifa 2006 WC* – complete all global challenges.

RetroAerosmith All the lazy 10,000 kills with certain weapons online.

krusty40 For me it's definitely trying to attain all of those unique jumps or find 100 hidden packages in the *GTA* games.

ARE WE GEEKS?

Antiriad 2097 Constantly. But I don't care. I have a negative reaction to reading *Heat* magazine, watching *I'm a Celebrity* and football. We all do stuff that other people don't 'get'.

jb1014 We are geeks, but so what – no more so than someone who collects anything else though. I actually think it is more acceptable to collect/be interested in old computers and consoles as it shows a certain level of understanding and passion.

SexyWayne I don't consider myself a geek, I just love games, have done since I had my first Pong machine.

station Aren't geeks fashionable today though? I saw some trendy pretty boy wearing a Nintendo T-shirt.

paranoid marvin Well I'm not a geek, and I've created a mathematical formula on my ZX81 (using only 13k!) to prove it.

rossie46 Being a long-time Linux enthusiast, I wear my geek badge with a degree of pride – though I take offence at being labelled a nerd.

3DO OPINIONS

jesus666 I got a 3DO when I was younger and always quite liked the console; it's got a bunch of nice games though nowhere near the software library of its competitors.

rocky1980 A 3DO is worth buying just for *Super Wing Commander*.

scapegoat My brother-in-law had one, and playing *Space Hulk* on his projector TV was pant-wettingly good. Seriously.

zerocool I must admit, I wanted this console when I first saw it back in 1994 – but no way could I afford that price tag.

woody.cool My personal (and honest) opinion is: the 3DO is a good console, but with a lack of decent software/games available for it.

Old VS NEW

Each month we'll be finding out if the classics are better than their successors. This month it's *Street Fighter II* against *Street Fighter IV*

Street Fighter II: The World Warrior | **Street Fighter IV**





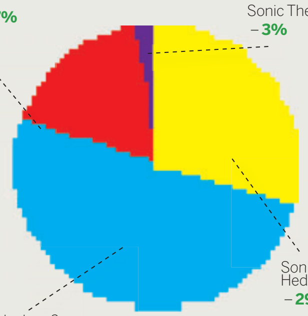
38% | 62%

felgekarp "*SFII* really started something off."

ShadowMan "Super SF II Turbo would've been closer."

HOT TOPIC

The best 2D Mega Drive/Mega CD Sonic Game



"Even Sophie wasn't faced with such a cruel and devastating choice to make as this. Can there really only ever be one? I can't choose, I won't choose." **– Team Alfie**

"*Sonic CD* is streets ahead of the competition. The only one which comes near is *Sonic 2*." **– oldtimer**

The biggest problems with Japanese developers is the language barrier, Ian. We're getting more and more Japanese developers to share their secrets with us though, so it'll probably only be a matter of time before something happens. Best keep your fingers crossed.

AUTHOR, AUTHOR

Hello Darran,

First of all, the latest edition of the magazine is fantastic – the sheer number of 'making of' articles has made it a real joy to read through and I really feel it's the best edition I've read so far. Top work.

Second, have you thought of a section in the magazine covering reviews of books on retro gaming/history of games/game design by famous game-authors? There are a HUGE amount of these around, and if I'm honest I wouldn't know where to start. I spied a cellophane-bound book in my local bookshop covering the history of games created over the years at LucasArts. Following on from your *Zak* making-of article I was interested in picking the book up, but I would love to read a review before shelling out £35 (the bookshop wouldn't let me take the cellophane off).

And now to my main point. A friend and I were talking about the game *Hunter* on the Amiga. I remember this being an essential buy at the time, and spent a huge amount of hours just playing the demo alone! I had a flick through some reviews from *The One* and *Amiga Action* and realised that although this was a very highly rated game, I was surprised to see it scored around 80 per cent in the reviews. In only a few years, these reviews seemed to push into the 90 per cents for the same quality of game – I distinctly remember the *Mario All-Stars* 99 per cent review in *Total* shipping as their entire front page.

So, what's happened now? Even magazines such as *Edge*, who steadfastly held on to handing only a digit full of 10s have been issuing them out for games that most certainly aren't perfect. If a game gets less than 9, people consider it as trash. How did that happen? It'd be pretty interesting to have an article interviewing some old editors and reviewers from the past with their thoughts on the matter.

Keep up the great work,

Jon via email

You'll be pleased to know that we're aiming to cover more aspects of retro gaming very, very soon – and books will definitely be on the agenda (Stuart's currently sitting on a huge pile of them). As for your point about reviews, it's certainly a good idea and could definitely make for interesting reading. Of course, you do need to bear in mind that reviews are always subjective and down to the individual who has reviewed the game. Hopefully by now though you should all have a good idea of the types of games the Retro Gamer reviewers like, and can take their preferences into account when you're reading them.

There are plenty of books on the subject of videogames. Expect more coverage starting from the very next issue.



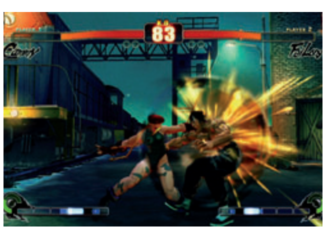
DISCUSSED THIS MONTH

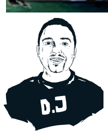
Fight! Fight!

This month we've been arguing over the best character in *Street Fighter IV*. Darran's adamant that Zangief is horribly broken (in a good way, as 360s are easy to do) but has also developed a fondness for both Rose and Fei-Long. Stuart, on the other hand, has been keeping it cheap and dirty with Ryu and Ken, although he's trying his best to master new girl C.Viper. Stephen doesn't actually own the game yet, but says that Blanka is the best character in the game because of the way he scratches his arse.

> We're aiming to cover more aspects of retro gaming very, very soon…

CURRENTLY PLAYING

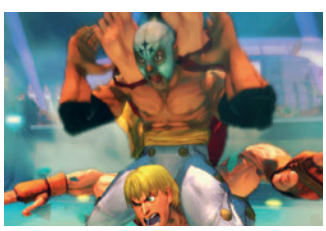




DARRAN

Street Fighter IV

I've now put in well over 30 hours into Capcom's exciting new brawler and I'm still discovering new tricks. *Street Fighter IV* is an utterly brilliant game that fills me with joy whenever I play it.

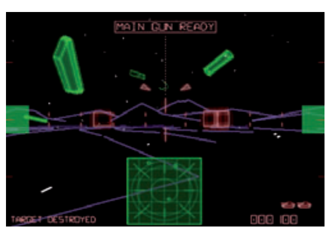




STUART

Street Fighter IV

Street Fighter IV is a truly great game from Capcom, although I reckon Darran selfishly chose the PS3 version so that he could avoid being challenged by my awesome Fei-Long and his Sky-Flying skills.





CRAIG

Vector Tanks

iPhone might not be great for certain games, but its multi-touch screen is perfect for Peter Hirschberg's stunning *Battlezone* tribute. Beware of the booming sound effects through headphones though…

retro GAMER

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Salesperson of the Year
JAMES HALEY

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BARGAIN HUNT

DESPERATE TO FINISH OFF YOUR RETRO COLLECTION? WANT TO GET YOUR HANDS ON ALL THE BEST BARGAINS BUT DON'T KNOW WHERE TO GO? THEN VISIT **WWW.RETROGAMER.NET/BARGAIN_HUNT.PHP** AND DISCOVER ALL THE CLASSIC MACHINES THAT YOU'LL EVER NEED

You've been asking for it forever, but we're pleased to announce a brand new look for **Retro Gamer**'s Buyer's Guide section that makes it incredibly easy to get your hands on all the best retro bargains.

Using our new search engine couldn't be easier, as all you need to do is select a manufacturer and machine from the pull-down menu. Once you've found the system you're after, the magic of the internet will search eBay for the top 20 ending items, meaning that you'll be able to gauge the market's health with very little effort. This month, Darran's been looking for cheap Mega-CD games.



Head on over to the excellent **www.retrogamer.net** and click on 'Bargain Hunt' or visit **www.retrogamer.net/bargain_hunt.php**



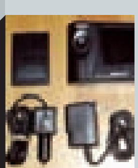
Put in the details for the greatest computer in the world and discuss with your staff writer why it's so much better than the ZX Spectrum.



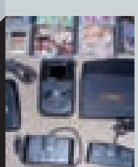
Swoon in delight as you find yourself getting ever closer to collecting all the £1.99 *Simulator* games that Codemasters ever released.

EBAY BARGAINS

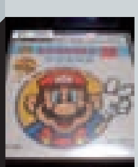
Retro Gamer has been scouring the world's most popular auction site, to find the best bargains out there…



■ Want to play Mega Drive games on the go? Well, if you've got a spare £50, now you can. This Sega Nomad going for $76, including nine games, is a steal.



■ The NEC TurboGrafx system is a great piece of kit, boasting plenty of arcade conversions. This lot, which included a GT Engine GT!, fetched £123.50.



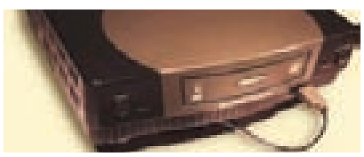
■ Mario collectors will look to snap up this rare copy of *Super Mario Bros 2* for the Famicom Disc System, which was going for a Buy It Now price of $29.00



■ Not really a bargain, but the N64DD is a difficult piece of kit to come by, which is why this one from Thailand was selling for almost $400 with two games.

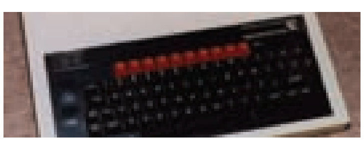
3DO

3DO GOLDSTAR	£45+ ($81+)
PANASONIC FZ-1 (FRONT LOADER)	£40+ ($74+)
PANASONIC FZ-10 (TOP LOADER)	£20+ ($37+)



ACORN

ARCHIMEDES	£30 ($55)
ATOM	£50 ($92)
ACORN ELECTRON	£10 ($18)
BBC MICRO	£15 ($28)



AMSTRAD

CPC 464	£10+ ($18+)
CPC 664	£90+ ($165+)
CPC 6128	£25+ ($46+)
GX4000	£50+ ($92+)

APPLE

APPLE II	£30+ ($55+)

ATARI

400/800/600XL/XE	£20+ ($37+)
2600 (VCS)	£20+ ($37+)
5200	£30 ($55)
7800	£20+ ($37+)
JAGUAR	£20+ ($37+)
JAGUAR CD	£70 ($129)
LYNX I/II	£20+ ($37+)
ST	£20+ ($37+)

BANDAI

GUNDAM RX-78	£75+ ($138+)
PLAYDIA	£90 ($166)
PIPPIN (ATMARK)	£500+ ($921+)
WONDERSWAN	£10 ($18)
WONDERSWAN COLOR	£20 ($37)
WONDERSWAN CRYSTAL	£25 ($46)



COMMODORE

AMIGA 500/600/1200	£20+ ($37+)
C16/PLUS/4	£15+ ($28+)
C64	£10+ ($18+)
C64 GS	£30+ ($55+)
C128	£30+ ($55+)
CDTV	£20 ($37)
CD32	£25 ($46)
VIC-20	£10+ ($18+)



FUJITSU

FUJITSU FM	£100+ ($184+)
FUJITSU FM TOWNS MARTY	£200+ ($368+)



MISCELLANEOUS

BALLY ASTROCADE	£20 ($37)
BARCODE BATTLER	£5 ($18)
CASIO LOOPY	£25 ($46)
FAIRCHILD CHANNEL F	£10 ($18)
COLECOVISION	£30 ($55)
DRAGON 32/64	£8 ($15)
ARCADIA 2001	£10 ($18)
EPOCH CASSETTE VISION	£20 ($37)
EPOCH SUPER CASSETTE VISION	£30 ($55)
INTELLIVISION	£40+ ($74+)
ODYSSEY	£10 ($18)
ORIC-1	£20 ($37)
PLAYSTATION	£10 ($18)
SAM COUPÉ	£50-£200 ($92-$368)
SUPERVISION	£15 ($28)
TIGER ELEC GAME.COM	£15 ($28)
TOMY TUTOR (MK1/JR/MK2)	£10 ($18)
VECTREX (MB/GCE)	£80 ($147)
X68000	£90+ ($166+)

MSX

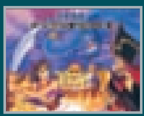
MSX 1	£10+ ($18+)
MSX 2	£20+ ($37+)
MSX 2+	£30+ ($55+)
MSX TURBO R	£30+ ($55+)

NEC

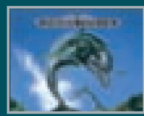
PC-6###	£10+ ($18+)

RETRO AUCTION WATCH

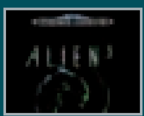
Retro Gamer sifts through the pages of eBay to report back on any items of interest, hardware or software, that caught our eyes. This month, we've been seeking out some classic Sega Mega Drive games



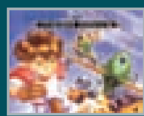
ALADDIN
System: **Mega Drive**
Normally sells for **£4**
Ended at **£2.47**



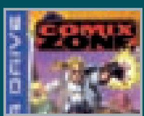
ECCO THE DOLPHIN
System: **Mega Drive**
Normally sells for **£4**
Ended at **£2.56**



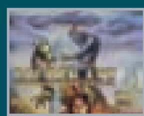
ALIEN 3
System: **Mega Drive**
Normally sells for **£4**
Ended at **$3.12**



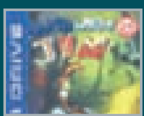
GUNSTAR HEROES
System: **Mega Drive**
Normally sells for **£14**
Ended at **£24**



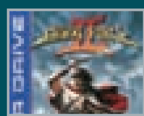
COMIX ZONE
System: **Mega Drive**
Normally sells for **£6**
Ended at **£12**



GOLDEN AXE III
System: **Mega Drive**
Normally sells for **£15**
Ended at **£12.60**



EARTHWORM JIM
System: **Mega Drive**
Normally sells for **£4**
Ended at **£3.46**



SHINING FORCE II
System: **Mega Drive**
Normally sells for **£35**
Ended at **£44**

PC-8801	**£20 ($37)**
PC-9801	**£35 ($65)**
PC-FX	**£50 ($92)**
PC-ENGINE	**£55 ($101)**
PC-ENGINE GT	**£70+ ($129+)**
TURBOGRAFX-16	**£30 ($55)**
TURBO EXPRESS	**£50 ($92)**
SUPERGRAFX	**£80 ($147)**
PC-E CD-ROM/ TURBOGRAFX CD	**£50+ ($92+)**
PC-E DUO/ TURBO DUO	**£120 ($221)**
DUO-R	**£80 ($147)**

NINTENDO

FAMICOM	**£60 ($111)**
FAMICOM AV	**£40 ($74)**
FAMICOM DISK SYSTEM	**£70 ($129)**
SHARP FAMICOM TWIN	**£100 ($184)**
GAME & WATCH	**£1+ ($2+)**
GAME BOY B/W	**£5 ($9)**
GAME BOY POCKET	**£8 ($15)**
GAME BOY COLOR	**£12 ($22)**
GAME BOY ADVANCE	**£25 ($46)**
N64	**£10 ($18)**
N64 DD	**£150+ ($276+)**
NES (TOASTER)	**£15 ($28)**
NES (DOG BONE)	**£50 ($92)**
SNES (SUPER FAMICOM IN JAPAN)	**£20 ($37)**
SNES 2 (KNOWN AS 'JR' IN JAPAN)	**£50+ ($92+)**
VIRTUAL BOY	**£80 ($147)**



PHILIPS

CD-I	**£20+ ($37+)**
CD-I 450/500	**£30 ($55)**
VIDEOPAC G7000	**£10 ($18)**
VIDEOPAC G7400	**£20 ($37)**

SEGA

32X	**£35 ($65)**
DREAMCAST	**£25 ($46)**
GAME GEAR	**£15 ($28)**
SG-1000	**£50-£150 ($80-$260)**
SC-3000	**£50 ($92)**
MASTER SYSTEM I/II	**£10 ($18)**



AMSTRAD MEGA PC	**£10 ($18)**
TERADRIVE	**£100 ($184)**
MEGA DRIVE/ GENESIS I/II	**£25 ($46)**
GENESIS 3	**£35 ($65)**
NOMAD	**£100 ($184)**
MULTIMEGA/ WONDERMEGA/ CDX/X'EYE	**£100+ ($184+)**
MEGA-CD (SCD) I/II	**£50+ ($92+)**
PICO	**£20 ($37)**
SATURN	**£30 ($55)**
MEGA CD (SCD) I/II	**£50+ ($92+)**

SINCLAIR

ZX80	**£200 ($368)**
ZX81	**£70 ($129)**
ZX SPECTRUM 48K	**£10 ($18)**
ZX SPECTRUM 128K	**£40 ($74)**
ZX SPECTRUM+	**£35 ($65)**
ZX SPECTRUM +2	**£35 ($65)**
ZX SPECTRUM +3	**£40 ($74)**

SNK

NEO-GEO AES	**£150+ ($276+)**
NEO-GEO MVS	**£70 ($129)**
NEO-GEO CD	**£100 ($184)**
NEO-GEO CDZ	**£80+ ($147+)**
NEO-GEO POCKET	**£20 ($37)**
NEO-GEO POCKET COLOR	**£35 ($65)**

COLLECTOR'S CORNER

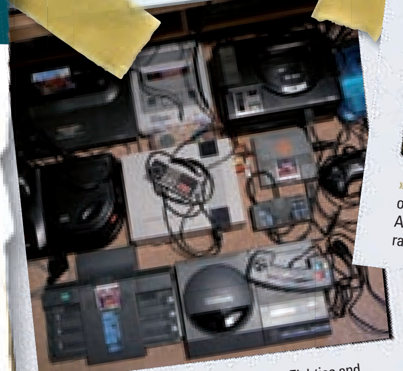
THIS ISSUE WE SPEAK TO KEVIN AYLETT, WHO OWNS A COLLECTION WORTH A FORTUNE. DON'T LOOK WITH BEADY EYES, THOUGH, AS HE'S NOT SELLING ANY TIME SOON



» I'm Kevin Aylett, a 33-year-old postman from Norfolk. I have well over 50 vintage consoles and hundreds of games.



» As well as various consoles and handhelds, I also have a huge collection of vintage computers, too. I own an MSX, BBC Micro, C16, Dragon 32, Amstrad 464, Acorn Electron, Commodore Plus/4, a Vectrex and the very rare Mattel Aquarius.



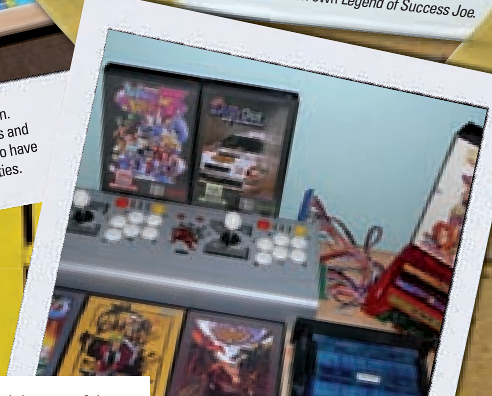
» These are some of my consoles from the Eighties and Nineties, and they're always connected up so I can play them straight away. My all-time favourite is the SNES.



» Here are some of the more valuable consoles I own. Some of these items are very hard to find nowadays and are worth a fortune, such as the PC Engine LT. I also have a Grandstand Adman console from the late Seventies.



» Some of my favourite Neo Geo games are shown here, including *Blazing Star, Pulstar, Metal Slug 1, 2, 3, 4* and *5* and *Last Resort*. I even own *Legend of Success Joe*.



If you have a collection that you feel the rest of the **Retro Gamer** readership needs to know about, then contact us at **retrogamer@imagine-publishing.co.uk** and we'll do our best to get you in the magazine.

BACK TO THE EIGHTIES

THE LATEST NEWS FROM SEPTEMBER 1986

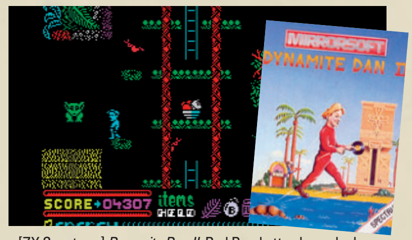




» Amstrad's first Spectrum since the takeover of Sinclair Research went down well with consumers and reviewers.



» [Spectrum] *Challenge Of The Gobots*: The only challenge in this game was to work out why you bought it in the first place.



» [ZX Spectrum] *Dynamite Dan II*: Rod Bowkett only worked on three games, the two *Dans* and a port of *Fernandez Must Die*.

SEPTEMBER 1986 – Amstrad unveils Plus 2, cartoon robot gaming wars, The Sentinel stands tall, Piranha hatched, Codemasters arrive, Thalamus is sanctioned and it's a long road for Gremlin. Richard Burton gets his ball out and takes to the highway…

On 4 September 1986 Amstrad's promised Spectrum Plus 2 arrived in a blaze of glory at the PCW show. With the tape recorder tagged on to its right-hand side exactly like the CPC 464, a much more professional-feeling keyboard and a price tag of £149, the attendees to the show, including computing journalists, were very impressed. However, you would have to wait until October to buy one from your local branch of Rumbelows…

The future of Amstrad's own CPC 464 was put into question by retailers as they saw the Plus 2 as direct competition to the machine. With Amstrad's CPC 6128 outselling its older tape-based brother and unwillingness by retailers to stock both the Plus 2 and CPC 464 machines together, the CPC 464's days looked numbered.

With Christmas looming, many software houses were busily touting their wares at the PCW show, too. An impressive medley of gaming delights were wheeled out to whet the appetites of gamers – that, and the opportunity of relieving their parents of their hard-earned wonga. However, many titles previewed were still at the development stage.

Ariolasoft revealed some attractive screenshots of its recently acquired toy licence for *The Gobots*. It would eventually be released as *Challenge Of The Gobots*, initially on the Spectrum and C64.

Unfortunately, *Gobots* turned into a wasted opportunity. When the game eventually emerged, along with another licensed gaming plop, *The Centurions*, it was to a murmur and stifled yawn from magazine reviewers.

Maybe the impending release of Activision's bigger, better toy-licensed game, *Transformers: The Battle To Save Earth*, had scared Ariolasoft? It needn't have worried, as again, a toy-based licence proved to be marginally less enjoyable than a punch in the face.

A new software house, Piranha, had an impressive and varied bunch of games on show for its first batch of releases. *The Trap Door*, based on the children's TV series voiced by Willie Rushton and featuring Berk, a blue plasticine servant who has numerous tasks to complete, was an arcade adventure that looked and played superbly.

Piranha also exhibited *Rogue Trooper*, based on the exploits of the blue-skinned *2000 AD* comic character, and also the excellent isometric arcade adventure, *Nosferatu The Vampyre*, which oozed atmosphere from every eerie pixel from the CPC and Spectrum versions on show.

Firebird, usually known for knocking out cheap and cheerful budget fodder, had two full-price releases on show – *Cholo*, a vector graphics post-apocalyptic game with more than a whiff of Novagen's *Mercenary* about it.

The Sentinel, its second release, was a hugely original game concept in which you attempted to absorb the energy of the aforementioned Sentinel while avoiding the same fate yourself. More chess-like than arcade game, *The Sentinel* blew the undergarments off everyone who played it… and quite rightly, too.

Continuing with the originality theme, Gremlin Graphics had *Trailblazer*. You play a ball placed on a checkerboard-style road with your mission to get from one end to the other. All sounds relatively simple. However, different coloured squares on the road cause your ball to jump, stop or do something equally bothersome.

The gameplay was frenetic but it also demanded concentration and fast reflexes.



» [Commodore Plus/4] *BMX Simulator*: If this was a sign of things to come, the future looked good for the new boys at Codemasters…



» [CPC] *Ghosts 'N Goblins*: Elite's conversion of the Capcom classic was a big hit on every 8-bit system it was released on.



» [ZX Spectrum] *Space Harrier*: The arcade port was as good as you could expect considering the limits of the 8-bit machines.

1986

SEPTEMBER NEWS

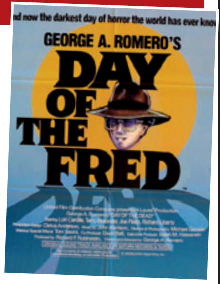
16 September saw one of the worst mining disasters in history when 177 miners died in the Kinross Gold Mine in South Africa. Toxic fumes from the plastic foam used to coat the inside of the tunnels caught fire which caused poisonous gas to be released.

On 5 September Pan Am Flight 73 was hijacked at Karachi Airport in Pakistan. After a 16 hour standoff, the four hijackers opened fire on the 390 passengers and crew. The final death toll was 22 with over 150 people injured.

26 September brought about one of the most farcical yet entertaining returns to a TV series ever, when Patrick Duffy, who played Bobby Ewing in *Dallas*, returned from the dead after being hit by a car in the previous season.

Fortunately, it was all just a bad dream in the mind of his wife Pam Ewing, as Bobby strode purposefully out of the shower as if nothing had happened. It was good for the show's falling ratings but a smack in the teeth for the fans, essentially erasing the events of the previous season.

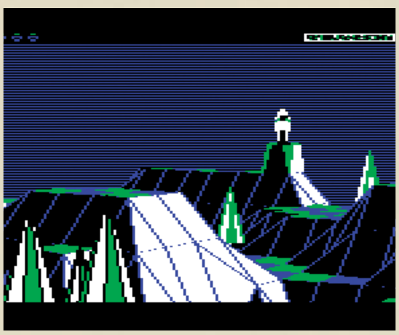
George A Romero's zombie flick *Day Of The Dead*, finally received its UK premiere on 12 September, a mere 15 months after the USA. It was remade in 2008, but stunk worse than a zombie's half-eaten maggot-ridden stump.



» Sadly the collaboration between Quicksilva and George A Romero never came to be. Shame, as we would have watched it.



» You can see why Bobby came back from the dead with a missus like Victoria Principal. Good work, sir.



» [C64] *The Sentinel*: It's original, unique, absorbing (literally) and atmospheric; it's simply one of the best 8-bit games ever.

Trailblazer looked and played well on all three versions on show; C64, CPC and Spectrum.

Elite, who had just released *Ghosts 'N Goblins* to much applause, revealed it was busily working on the conversion of another arcade classic, *Space Harrier*. Quite how the stunning fast-paced graphics were going to be re-created on an 8-bit machine was anyone's guess. Either way, *Space Harrier* was pencilled in for a Christmas release. Presumably the hydraulic chair was not to be included…



» [CPC] *Nosferatu The Vampyre*: An excellent, but overlooked, isometric game that has lovely graphics and heaps of character.

With lots of full-priced software ready to hit the high street, the news that a new software house was hoping to release 50 new budget games in the next three months must've caused consternation, and a raised eyebrow or two, among the software house big boys.

The newly formed Codemasters, run by Jim Darling and his two sons, Richard and David, hoped to launch its avalanche of new games over the coming months covering most 8-bit formats. First on the list would be *BMX Simulator*, the first in a recurring theme of simulator games that the Codies would become infamous for. All titles cost just £1.99.

Another new software house debuting was Thalamus with its horizontal shoot-'em-up *Sanxion*. Thalamus was set up as the software arm of Newsfield Publications by Roger Kean, Franco Frey and cover artist extraordinaire, Oliver Frey. Surely very favourable reviews by their magazines would follow? They did, but in most cases it was warranted.

Meanwhile, over at Newsfield, *Amtix!*, its CPC magazine, felt the need to bestow Amtix Accolades on to *Knight Tyme* (Mastertronic), *The Boggit* (CRL), *Tempest* (Electric Dreams) and *Jack The Nipper* (Gremlin Graphics).

Zzap!64 liberally awarded everlasting Sizzledom upon *Arac* (Addictive Games), *Knight Games* (English Software), *Mercenary: The Second City* (Novagen), *Split Personalities* (Domark) and *Hercules* (Alpha Omega).

As good as they were none could touch the two Gold Medallists this month; the mighty *Ghosts 'N Goblins* (Elite) and the Graphic Adventure Creator (Incentive).

Crash gave *Dan Dare* (Virgin), *Dynamite Dan II* (Mirrorsoft), *The Boggit* (CRL) and the aforementioned Graphic Adventure Creator (Incentive) the Crash Smash seal of approval.

THIS MONTH IN…

BANG WEEKLY



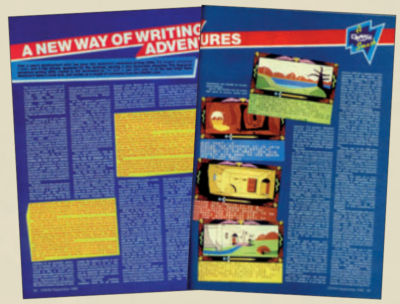
New to the newsstands was *Bang*, a newspaper for computer gamers with the usual assortment of TV, film and music featurettes sprinkled in for good measure. It was certainly a bold and different direction to take with the large format pages and newspaper quality paper. Although entertaining to read, it never really caught on.



CRASH



With the Graphic Adventure Creator by Incentive featuring prominently in most mags, *Crash* also went with a two-page feature on the new utility, boldly proclaiming that The Quill, an earlier adventure writing utility, was dead. GAC spawned many commercial titles shortly afterwards, so maybe *Crash* was right.



ZZAP!64



Elite Systems was very happy after receiving a Zzap! Gold Medal for its wonderful conversion of the arcade classic *Ghosts 'N Goblins*. The glowing review received a colossal 97% and the approval didn't end there with the Amstrad, Spectrum and C16 versions also receiving richly deserved praise, too.



CHARTS

SEPTEMBER 1986

MUSIC



1. Don't Leave Me This Way (The Communards)
2. We Don't Have To Take Our Clothes Off (Jermaine Stewart)
3. I Want To Wake Up With You (Boris Gardiner)
4. Glory Of Love (Peter Cetera)
5. (I Just) Died In Your Arms (Cutting Crew)

SPECTRUM



1. Ghosts 'N Goblins (Elite)
2. Jack The Nipper (Gremlin Graphics)
3. Green Beret (Imagine)
4. Bobby Bearing (The Edge)
5. Knight Tyme (Mastertronic)

COMMODORE 64



1. Ghosts 'N Goblins (Elite)
2. Knight Games (English Software)
3. Thrust (Mastertronic)
4. Dragon's Lair (Software Projects)
5. Mercenary: The Second City (Novagen)

AMSTRAD

1. Kane (Mastertronic)
2. Storm (Mastertronic)
3. Ghosts 'N Goblins (Elite)
4. Harvey Headbanger (Firebird)
5. Green Beret (Imagine)



BACK TO THE NINETIES

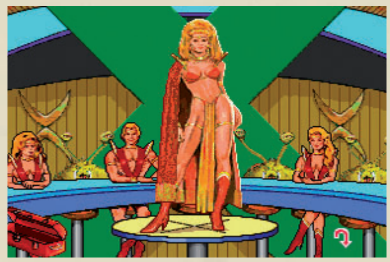
THE LATEST NEWS FROM SEPTEMBER 1991



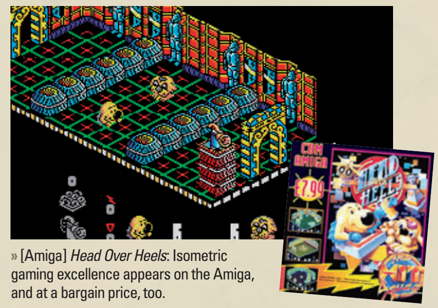
SEPTEMBER '91 – Amstrad gets PC, Zzap crashes and Crash is zzaped, Gremlin goes budget, Sensible goes soccer, Archimedes goes Elite and Ocean is Head Over Heels as Sega cuts prices. Richard Burton feels mostly harmless in a dangerous sort of way…



» Amstrad's new PC5286 didn't really go down too well with gamers…



» [PC] *Leather Goddesses Of Phobos 2: Gas Pump Girls Meet The Pulsating Inconvenience From Planet X*: Big title, poor game.



» [Amiga] *Head Over Heels*: Isometric gaming excellence appears on the Amiga, and at a bargain price, too.

Amstrad revealed its plans to release a new PC aimed squarely at the gaming market. The PC5286 would have a 40GB hard drive and 1MB of RAM but, rather strangely, Amstrad decided to keep the system as simplistic as possible with no room for later expansion.

With this in mind, the new PC, thought to be the first in a series Amstrad would produce, was going to be targeting the first-time PC owner/gamer. Would the lure of three bundled games – *Links* (US Gold), *Prince Of Persia* (DoMark) and *F-15 Fighter II* (MicroProse) – be enough to sway potential purchasers away from the Amiga or Atari's ST?

After Amstrad's last foray into the gaming market with the superbly awful GX4000 console, the £999 price tag placed on this fairly low-spec PC looked to be another marketing faux pas by Amstrad.

Atari's handheld Lynx console looked to have a substantial and promising flurry of software coming its way in time for the festive season. Atari revealed a roster of over 20 new games, including titles such as *Pac-Land*, *Chequered Flag* and *S.T.U.N. Runner*, which would be available in time to be under the Christmas tree along with their chocolate orange and Hai Karate gift set.



» Newsfield Publications voluntarily liquidated itself after some of its newer magazines failed to take off; epitomised by the short-lived *LM*.

Sega Europe announced a further price reduction to its Mega Drive console, the second price cut of the year, with a further £20 knocked off the price bringing it down to £129. The main reasoning behind the drop was to see off the increasing threat of imported grey market machines. In most cases, these machines were priced in excess of Sega's own recommended retail price point.

September proved an unforgiving month for magazines. Newsfield, the publisher of *Crash*, *Zzap!64* and *Raze*, sadly went into voluntarily liquidation. Newsfield had been highly successful with its dedicated 8-bit system magazines but later launches including the leisure and lifestyle magazine *LM*, *Movie* and to a certain extent, *Raze* and *The Games Machine*, failed to spark the imagination of the readers as with its earlier titles.

After the October issues, both *Crash* and *Zzap* were sold to rival publisher Euro Press. *Raze*, the console-dedicated magazine, wound up the same month, after just 12 issues.

Also leaving the newsstands was *Your Commodore*, published by Alphavite Publications, which ran the last of its 83 issues with the September edition.

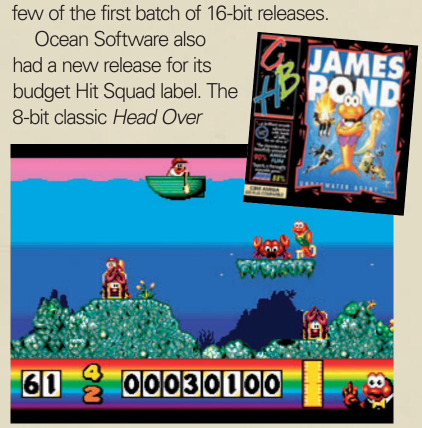


» [Atari Lynx] *Chequered Flag*: Not to be confused with the simple (yet still brilliant) Sinclair title of the same name.

Footy fever had set in at Sensible Software. It let slip that it was working on a new football game that at the time had no working title. It did reveal that it would be a top-down style game rather than side-on and would feature weather conditions, sliding tackles and a large database of teams and players. Although nothing too astoundingly groundbreaking there, the playability of the game would blow everyone away. Sensible's soccer game was set to become a classic. If only it could settle on a name…

Gremlin Graphics finally succumbed to the fate of many full-price games developers by introducing its own budget label to compete for sales. Gremlin's el cheapo division would be called GBH, would cater for both 8 and 6-bit machines, with tape games retailing at £3.99 and disks at £7.99. *James Pond*, *Thunderstrike* and *Kid Gloves* would be just a few of the first batch of 16-bit releases.

Ocean Software also had a new release for its budget Hit Squad label. The 8-bit classic *Head Over*



» [Amiga] *James Pond*: Time to stop piscine around. It's the rerelease of the cute and colourful fish-based platform game.

1991

SEPTEMBER NEWS

3 September saw the passing of the influential film director Frank Capra at the age of 94. A prolific filmmaker throughout the Twenties and Thirties, including three Best Director Oscars, his most famous movie was *It's A Wonderful Life* in 1947.

And from movie classics, we move to the other end of the spectrum with the UK premiere of *True Identity*. It starred Lenny Henry as a man attempting to escape the unwanted attention of the Mafia by turning into a white man with the help of his special effects make-up friend. Although not the most taxing movie in the world, it was what it was, light entertainment with a handful of laughs. That didn't stop it from absolutely bombing at the box office, though…

20 September saw another movie premiering in the UK featuring more latex laden effects. *F/X2: The Art Of Illusion* starring Brian Dennehy and Bryan Brown was a passable sequel to the original, *F/X: Murder By Illusion*. Well, at least Lenny Henry wasn't in it…



» *It's A Wonderful Life*… well not for Oscar winning director Frank Capra as he died this month in 1991.

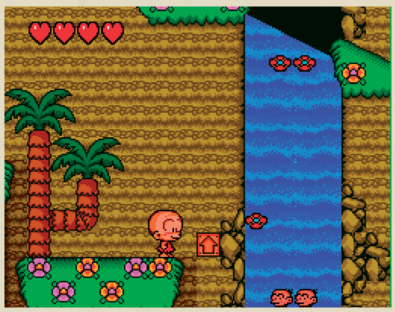


» Lenny Henry has never been better than David Bellamy was in Compost Corner on Tiswas. Gwapple me gwape nuts!





» [Acorn Archimedes] *Elite*: Arguably the best version of *Elite*, yet still the docking procedure is a pain in the wormhole.



» [PC Engine] *PC Kid 2*: This quirky platform game was known in Japan as *PC Genjin 2* and in the USA as *Bonk's Revenge*. I say…

Heels was finally receiving its belated debut on the Amiga and Atari ST. Again, just £7.99 would buy you a big old slice of isometric gaming loveliness.

Good news for Archimedes gamers (yes, you read that right…), with a press release announcing the Acorn Archimedes version of the classic space trading game Elite. The much-enhanced version allowed for independent situations to occur without your participation or irritating interferences, such as ships having their own battles while you travel through a solar system.

Archimedes Elite was published by Hybrid and would've set you back an eye-wateringly hefty £39.95, but it is considered by many to be the best version available of the original *Elite*.

Activision and Infocom proudly announced they were developing a sequel to the hit graphical adventure, *Leather Goddesses Of Phobos*. With possibly one of the longest and strangest game titles ever created, the new adventure would go by the lengthy name of *Leather Goddesses Of Phobos 2: Gas Pump Girls Meet The Pulsating Inconvenience From Planet X*.

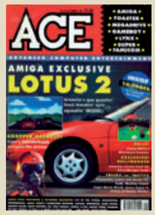
With this new point-and-click adventure being written by the author of the original game, based on a B-movie style story line and featuring plenty of female form, you would think it would've been relatively good. Unfortunately, the game proved to be uninteresting and mundane. If only they had spent as much time on the development as they did with the game's title… It was available only on PC, so if anything, be thankful for that at least.

Mean Machines had a mighty selection of games attaining its top Mega Game award in its reviews section. The top scorers included *UN Squadron* (Capcom, Super Famicom), *Road Rash* (Electronic Arts, Mega Drive), *Spiderman* (Sega, Mega Drive), *Starflight* (Electronic Arts, Mega Drive), *Choplifter II* (Victor Musical, Game Boy), *Streets Of Rage* (Sega, Mega Drive) and *Super R-Type* (IREM, Super Famicom).

Computer & Video Games concurred and also awarded its coveted C&VG Hit to *Super R-Type* and *Road Rash*, while also finding time to play and significantly slobber over *Exile* (Audiogenic, Amiga/ST), *PC Kid 2* (Hudson Soft, PC Engine), *NHL Ice Hockey* (Electronic Arts, Mega Drive), *AH-73M Thunderhawk* (Core, Amiga), *Jimmy White's Whirlwind Snooker* (Virgin Games, Atari ST) and *Populous* (Tecmagik, Master System).

THIS MONTH IN…

ACE



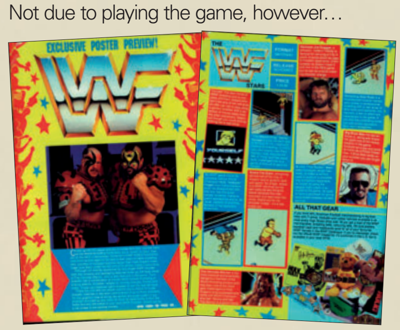
According to *ACE* in its special four-page feature, the Hubble Space Telescope had located a planet containing life and moreover, the individual continents on the planet contain specific types of species according to the genre of videogame they play. It certainly must have been a quiet time for games and news at *ACE* that month…



COMPUTER & VIDEO GAMES



The Ultimate Warrior graced *C&VG*'s cover due to the forthcoming *WWF Wrestlemania Challenge* game on the NES. Sadly, many of the legends that featured in it, like Big Boss Man and Andre The Giant, have all died. Not due to playing the game, however…



YOUR COMMODORE



The last issue of *Your Commodore* ran an interview with Richard and David Darling of Codemasters, the biggest software house in the UK. In it, they mentioned their rare first ever release; the Vic 6-Pack for Vic-20 under the Galactic Software name. Ker-ching!



CHARTS

SEPTEMBER 1991

AMIGA



1. Manchester United Europe (Krisalis)
2. F-15 Strike Eagle II (MicroProse)
3. Full Contact (Team 17)
4. Secret Of Monkey Island (US Gold/ Lucasfilm)
5. Xenon 2: Megablast (Mirror Image)

ATARI ST

1. Manchester United Europe (Krisalis)
2. Xenon 2: Megablast (Mirror Image)
3. Ninja Rabbits (Micro Value)
4. Lombard RAC Rally (Hit Squad)
5. Flames Of Freedom (Rainbird)

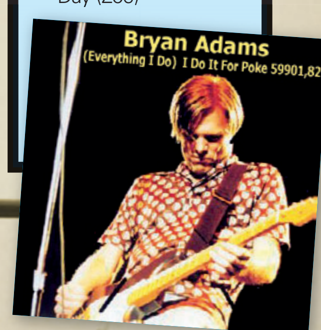


PC

1. Chuck Yeager's Air Combat (Electronic Arts)
2. Castles (Electronic Arts)
3. 3D Construction Kit (Incentive/DoMark)
4. Mario Andretti's Racing Challenge (Electronic Arts)
5. Space Quest IV (Sierra)

MUSIC

1. (Everything I Do) I Do It For You (Bryan Adams)
2. I'm Too Sexy (Right Said Fred)
3. Let's Talk About Sex (Salt-n-Pepa)
4. Insanity (Oceanic)
5. Sunshine On A Rainy Day (Zoe)



10

ZOMBIE ZOMBIE

ANTS VERSUS ZOMBIES



- » **PUBLISHER:** QUICKSILVA
- » **RELEASED:** 1984
- » **GENRE:** ADVENTURE
- » **FEATURED HARDWARE:** ZX SPECTRUM
- » **EXPECT TO PAY:** A FEW QUID



HISTORY

I loved *Ant Attack*… I still love *Ant Attack*. It was (and is) indescribably good. The loneliness of the city, the rescue, the viciousness of the ants… it's in my all-time top-five ZX games list, and I still load it up and play it to this very day.

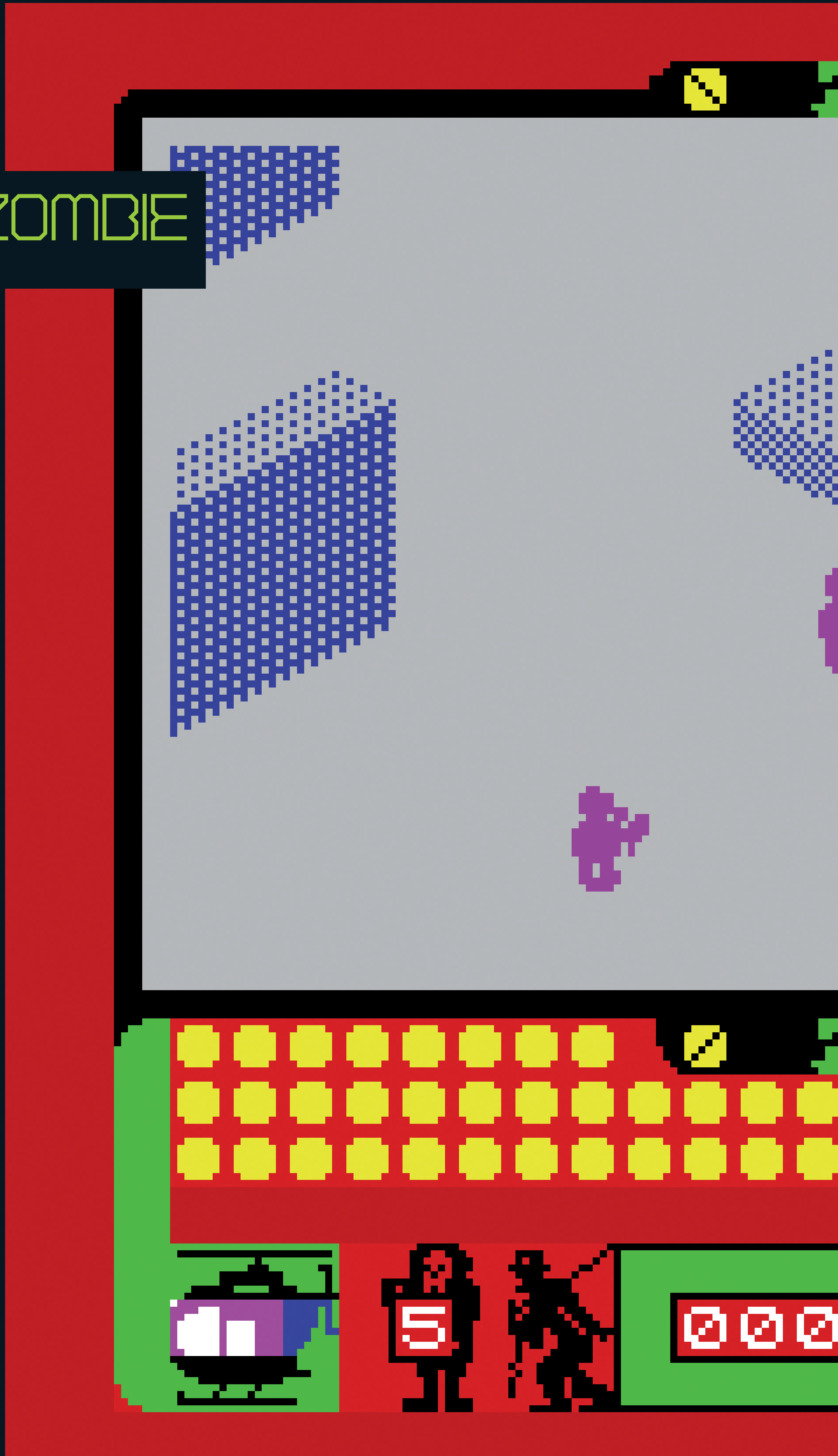
Zombie Zombie though is trickier to love. That's not to say it isn't a good game, it's a great game, but there's just something missing. Like *Alien 8* is to *Knight Lore*, Sandy White's follow-up game was a slight disappointment compared to its older brother.

The idea sounded good. You got to fly a helicopter around the Soft Solid 3D city and move blocks around with your chopper. You had to get out of your helicopter and carefully creep up on the walking cadavers from behind – at which point they'd change colour – and then lure them into your newly built undead drop zones where they'd fall off the edge and squish on the floor. Fun could also be had by simply redesigning the city with your little red helicopter. I'm sure you could even rearrange the blocks to make rude words on the ground. But I wasn't immature enough to do that, although I suspect some of my more immoral friends probably did!

So why was *Zombie Zombie* a slight disappointment? Well, it was the fact that *Ant Attack* had done it better already. In fact, when I think back to the time I first saw *Ant Attack*, I remember being shocked. I couldn't believe the ZX Spectrum could create graphics like that… surely, only the big, expensive US computers I'd seen on *Micro Live* with Ian McNaughton could do that. But as we now know, the Spectrum could and did do amazing-looking 3D graphics. *Ant Attack* was simply more atmospheric, the city of Antescher better designed, the menacing giant ants a more satisfying opponent and the whole game mechanic simply worked more successfully.

…And remember due to strong personal convictions, I wish to stress that this review in no way endorses a belief in the occult!

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RETROBATE PROFILE

- » **NAME:** IAN MARKS
- » **JOINED:** 17 AUGUST 2008
- » **LOCATION:** LEICESTER
- » **OCCUPATION:** TEACHER
- » **FAV GAMES SYSTEM:** ZX SPECTRUM



Retro Gamer Celebrates The MEGA DR

With the release of the Mega Drive Ultimate Collection getting everyone playing Mega Drive games again, we decided there was no better time to look back at the triumphs of Sega's 16-bit wonder machine through the eyes of those who lived and breathed it

Despite the Master System's inability to break Nintendo's kung-fu grip over Japan and the US, and the collateral damage caused by the commercial collapse of the Mega-CD, the fact remains that each and every one of Sega's machines made important contributions to the videogames industry, helping to shape it into the billion-dollar beast it is today.

Sega's Master System is memorable for marking the company's first attempt at taking 'home gaming' global, and despite the console's inability to break Nintendo's vice-like grip over the US and Japan, it allowed Sega to penetrate territories where the Big N had struggled – most notably in Europe and South America. The Japanese version (the SG-1000 Mark III) is also noteworthy for being one of the few consoles to offer backwards compatibility out of the box, with the third version of the machine compatible with both Mark I and Mark II software. Plus, the system introduced (in a loose sense) a 'budget' range of console software, with the credit-card sized MyCards in 1985, and Opa-Opa and Alex Kidd pioneered the idea of a Sega mascot before Sonic the Hedgehog was even a spiky glimmer in Yuji Naka's eye. More importantly than all that

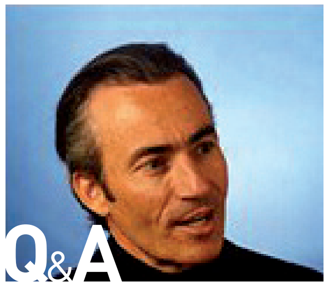


RIVE

though, the Master System turned Sega's focus away from the arcade and home-computer markets and set it firmly on the road to console development.

When Sega launched the Mega Drive in Japan (on 29 October 1988), the company faced stiff competition from a firmly established Nintendo still riding high from the popularity of the Famicom, and the new, sleek-looking 8-bit powerhouse called the PC-Engine – a joint hardware venture by Japanese electronics companies Hudson Soft and Nippon Electronics Company (NEC) that was allowing some of the most popular arcade games, including several Sega licences, to be played in the home.

At the time, the main ambition of Hayao Nakayama, then head of Sega, was to create an arcade system for the home, similar to how NEC had positioned the PC-Engine. Despite the obvious direct competition that would present, it was a decision that made sense for two reasons. First, Sega's amusement division was producing some of the most popular arcade games of the day, and, second, the internal specs of the Mega Drive were based on a revision of Sega's System 16 arcade board. With the machine's development overseen by Sega technician Hideki Sato, the Mega Drive's arcade



Q&A

Trip Hawkins

Founder and former CEO of Electronic Arts

Retro Gamer: Many people feel that EA was instrumental in the Mega Drive's Western success. Is this something you'd agree with?
Trip Hawkins: There's no question about it, considering that EA had about 50 per cent of the software business for the Mega Drive and expanded the market with EA Sports, *Populous* and *Road Rash*.

RG: What was your relationship with Sega like?
TH: To this day, there is a high degree of mutual respect and class in my relationships with David Rosen, the founder of Sega, Nakayama, who acquired and modernised Sega in the digital era, and Tom Kalinske, who was president of Sega of America during the heyday. That said, we did go toe-to-toe when we negotiated deals and it was no holds barred. In hindsight, I imagine for all of us that we consider each other among the more entertaining characters we have had the opportunity to do business with in our lives.

RG: What were those little yellow tabs for on EA carts?
TH: It was just for a bit of colour and visual interest and it probably kept the cartridge from cracking open. It's great that you remember something that silly.

RG: Many EA games were far better on the Mega Drive than they were on the SNES, why was this?
TH: It's pretty simple really. If you only wanted to do a paintbox program or a beautiful landscape for *Mario* that scrolled slowly, the SNES was great. But for conventional games with conventional animation needs, the Mega Drive was the clear winner.

RG: Which EA Mega Drive game do you feel best took advantage of the machine and why?
TH: It's hard to argue with *Madden Football*, *Populous*, or *Road Rash*. I also loved *PGA Tour Golf*.

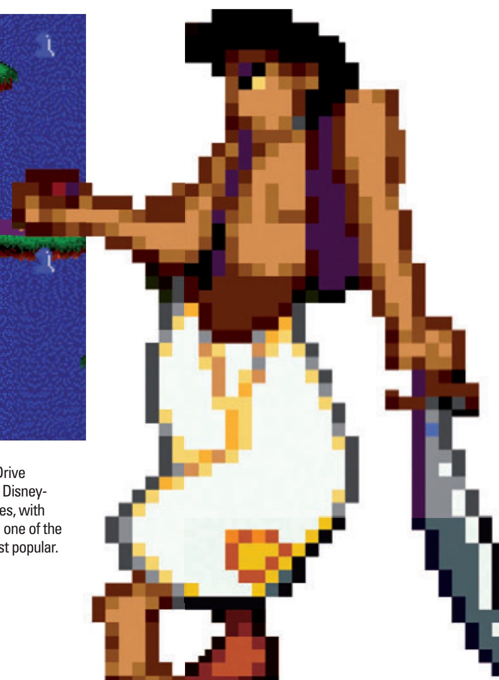
RG: What's the best non-Electronic Arts Mega Drive game you've ever played and why?
TH: My personal favourite would probably be *Rampart*, and I also really liked *ToeJam & Earl*. The most successful non-EA game would of course be *Sonic* but that's not my favourite genre.

RG: Why do you think the machine remains so popular with gamers?
TH: Plug and play, two players head-to-head, graphics that are good enough, your favourite sports. What's not to like?



» In Sega's determination to find a mascot for the Mega Drive this duo was mooted; ToeJam and Earl were a dysfunctional pair of aliens who appeared in one of the most original and colourful games on the machine.





» The Mega Drive excelled with Disney-licensed games, with *Aladdin* being one of the console's most popular.



» The gritty cyberpunk adventure *Flashback* struck a chord with plenty of Mega Drive owners on its release – not that Conrad would ever remember.



Retro Gamer Celebrates The MEGA DRIVE

The EA Connection
Americans love sport and war sims, and thanks to EA the Mega Drive did, too…

ROAD RASH
Sometimes the clumping together of two game genres can have less than desirable results; you often end up with a game of two halves with neither feeling strong enough. Not so with *Road Rash*, a game that mixed the brutal dust-ups of *Streets Of Rage* with the exhilarating driving of *Super Hang-On* with astonishing aplomb. Spanning a series of three games for the Mega Drive, *Road Rash* proved a popular racing series on Sega's machine and a hugely successful franchise for EA.



JOHN MADDEN FOOTBALL
To say *John Madden Football* was as important to the Mega Drive's Western dominance as *Sonic The Hedgehog* is no understatement. With American football the most popular thing in the US since the hamburger, this game's success was secure. Rushed through development at the behest of Sega, who was desperate to have a Mega Drive football game on its machine, EA cemented Sega's fortunes by helping the Mega Drive find its way into millions of US homes.



DESERT STRIKE
Desert Strike caused a bit of a stir following its release after some loopy members of the press criticised EA's game for attempting to capitalise on atrocities of the Gulf War – we, of course, side with EA and believe that war games have and always will have their role to play in videogames, contemporary or otherwise. *Desert Strike* was an isometric take on the classic POW-rescue classic *Choplifter*, and like its popular Apple II muse, mixed elements of action and strategy brilliantly.



FIFA INTERNATIONAL SOCCER
The most eagerly anticipated 16-bit football game of all time, *FIFA Soccer* had a similar effect on us European Mega Drive owners as *John Madden Football* had on our American cousins. While its isometric perspective meant *FIFA* wasn't the most intuitive or slickest of football titles of the day, the game did boast some wonderfully detailed-looking player and stadium graphics, immersive sounds, and wrapped everything up in a nice little 'official' package.



» One of the slickest-looking games to ever appear on the Mega Drive, *Earthworm Jim* was bestowed the honour of Game Of The Year by a chuffed as punch Sega.





Q&A
David Perry
Shiny Entertainment founder

Retro Gamer: From a game programmer's point of view, what would you say were the machine's strengths and weaknesses?
David Perry: Scrolling with sprites was what these machines were designed to do. I guess our angle was the way we compressed up animation and could still get it to display fast. We also had come up with a way to use really good pencil animators and get those pencil drawings, coloured and compressed into our funky format, and then gave a lot of control to the animators so they could tweak to their heart's content.

RG: Many feel that Shiny was instrumental in the Mega Drive's Western success. Do you agree?
DP: I was in the right place at the right time. I flew from England to the US to make *Global Gladiators*, then surprisingly it won a Game Of The Year award from Sega, just as I was planning to go back to the UK. So I stayed and made *Cool Spot*, Sega ended up liking that and published it themselves, so they gave us *Aladdin*. *Aladdin* ended up winning a ton of awards and was even boxed with the hardware. So how could I leave? That's when I started the *Earthworm Jim* team in Laguna Beach and those guys rocked. Once Sega saw that, we got Game Of The Year again. So I guess my point is that it all just fit together. If I'd left and gone back to the UK, who knows how this would have played out.

RG: Were there any developers writing software for the Mega Drive that you respected and admired?
DP: I finally got to meet Yuji Naka, he was my hero at the time. There were plenty of other great teams around, the one that scared me the most was Treasure. They also were somehow getting more out of the hardware than just about anyone else. *Gunstar Heroes* was one of my favourites at the time and I always lived in fear of their next game. So I think again that pushed us to keep trying harder.

RG: Was there any reason why you 'appeared' to favour developing for the Mega Drive over the SNES?
DP: I had a friend called Nick Jones who was a fantastic SNES programmer, so I felt he had that machine covered. Back in those days we (as a group) all worked on different hardware and did conversions for each other. I was Spectrum -> Amiga -> Atari ST -> Genesis. He was Commodore 64 -> SNES. Another friend was PC. I guess if he had grabbed the Genesis, I'd have ended up on the SNES. It's funny how things work out.

RG: Why do you think Sega's Mega Drive has remained so popular?
DP: It's where a lot of us grew up, and really bit into some fantastic games. There was such a wide library of cool games. Just thinking about it makes me want to go and fire up my old Nomad.

RG: What is your best memory of the Mega Drive?
DP: Walking into the room for the *Aladdin* launch. Over 1,000 of the world's press at CES coming to see our game. The platform had really hit the 'big time'. 15 years later, I've still never seen an equivalent press launch, anything remotely as spectacular just for a videogame. So those *were* the days!

beginnings meant it would produce wonderfully accurate arcade ports and also prove an easy platform for third-party developers to work with. Also, it seemed Sega was looking to the Mega Drive as a cost-effective path to generate sequels to its arcade hits and to create franchises. When Sega released the Mega Drive in Japan, it was launched with three such (albeit not great) games, all of which supported this thinking – *Space Harrier II* and *Super Thunder Blade*, with *The Revenge Of Shinobi* following a few months later.

Despite its promising-sounding software lineup and technical credentials, sales of the Mega Drive proved slow in Japan, and the machine's inability to break the country proved the source of much frustration for Nakayama and his team. It's possible that the Mega Drive's battle to strike a chord with Japanese gamers could be largely down to the very same reason it would later prove such a hit in North America.

NEC released the PC-Engine in Japan on 30 October 1987, almost a year earlier, to the day, than Sega would roll out the Mega Drive. This 12-month head start on the market, coupled with the fact that NEC was reportedly pumping almost $4 billion into R&D and that Japanese gamers were said to be thirsting for a 16-bit machine, gave NEC the perfect opportunity to capitalise on demand. By the time Sega was finally ready to launch the Mega Drive across Japan, the PC-Engine had overtaken the Famicom to become the bestselling console in the country. NEC had captured almost a third of the market. Perhaps it was this realisation that saw Sega hurry the Mega Drive's US release a year later, the same time NEC was planning to make its assault in America armed with a re-skinned version of the PC-Engine.

And so began a ferocious battle between marketing men and women, as both Sega and NEC fought to beleaguer Nintendo's hold over the North American videogames market. It was a battle that Sega would win thanks to a pair of aces up its sleeve. First, the Mega Drive (rebranded the Genesis in the US) was supported by a selection of launch titles (*Altered Beast* and *The Revenge Of Shinobi*) that found an instant appeal among young Western gamers – which is unsurprising; you need only look at the curious Western appearance of Joe Musashi in *Shinobi* or breathe in the Americana literally dripping from the exhaust of *OutRun*'s red Ferrari to see that Sega had always demonstrated a great proficiency in melding Eastern and Western cultural influences into its early arcade games. The other advantage Sega had was that it also had one hell of a marketing arm to drive the Mega Drive in the US – a team who was astonishingly apt at capturing the tastes and moods of the market.

Sega of America began as a distribution company, with hardware, software, and key decisions (such as the unpopular need for regional lockout in the Genesis) being made in Tokyo and filtered across to its Redwood City offices in California. Thanks

“A wave of EA titles began appearing at a rapid rate”



to Nintendo’s heretical approach to business, and the stringent licensing agreements it imposed on software developers, the Japanese giant quickly built up a bit of bullish reputation in the West. This would prove beneficial to Sega. Under the guidance of Michael Katz, the then-president of Sega’s US arm, the popularity of the Genesis gained momentum quickly as developers started seeing Sega’s new machine as a viable and potentially profitable platform. Scot Bayliss, who joined Sega of America as a technical director in 1992, explains:

“At the time, Nintendo was notorious for having this insufferably arrogant attitude towards third-party publishers. To be fair, I question how much of that was by intent, but the perception of software makers here in North America and in Europe was that Nintendo was heavy handed, capricious and unfair in its treatment of the West. That single factor probably drove the creation of more good software on Sega’s hardware than anything else. To third parties, we were the good partner and some of the most important titles in the West came to us first, exclusively or just better as a result. Later, Sony positioned themselves against both Sega and Nintendo as the first party who would step up to helping third-party publishers. They essentially replicated Sega’s strategy of being the friendly face to developers – only they did it better. And the results spoke for themselves.”



It’s a well-known fact that Electronic Arts, through its popular range of sports titles, would prove instrumental in helping the Mega Drive secure an early success in the US. After it was discovered that EA had reverse engineered the Genesis hardware, a cocksure EA threatened to release unlicensed software on the platform unless a favourable licensing agreement could be met. Sega, possibly fearing the bad publicity this could throw up, baulked at the threat and Electronic Arts got its wish. The first wave of EA titles began appearing on the machine at a rapid rate, which was of course great news for a new console with a relatively small amount of software on its shelf. The sweet irony, of course, is that the speed at which EA was able to turn out its titles for the Mega Drive could only be attributed to Trip Hawkins reverse engineering the Genesis in the first place. But, as Bayliss explains, EA wasn’t the only company who worked out how to circumvent Sega’s security measures and tried to use it to their benefit.

“There were quite a few third parties that figured out how to bypass the Mega Drive’s security checks,” he says. “Probably most notorious among these rogue publishers was Accolade. And, of course, Sega sued. And there was much wailing and gnashing of teeth. But the reality is that opening up the platform like that, while it certainly cut into Sega’s direct licensing revenue, it may well have helped them hit critical mass far more quickly.”

So what was the attraction of the Genesis from a development standpoint? And what was it that Trip Hawkins saw in the Mega Drive that persuaded him to bet so heavily on the hardware? We contacted the Electronic Arts founder to find out.

“The 8-bit systems weren’t powerful enough and the 16-bit computers cost too much,” says Hawkins. “The Mega Drive was the first affordable consumer product with an MC68000 processor. I was involved in one of the first commercial uses of that processor

The Sega Connection

We look at some of the Sega franchises that turned SNES owners green with envy

STREETS OF RAGE

After Nintendo had secured the licence for *Final Fight* for the Super Nintendo, Sega set to work on its own brawler. And while *Final Fight* clearly had the graphical edge over its scruffy rival, in terms of gameplay, depth of moves and enjoyment, *Streets Of Rage* knocked Capcom’s game out cold. Sega quickly followed up its efforts with *Streets Of Rage II*, a game that ramped up the moves, the graphics, the bosses and the soundtrack of the original, and a third game that rounded off the trilogy brilliantly – although we advise you to get the Japanese version as it has a better story, skimpier outfits, better colour palettes and a difficulty level that wasn’t set by a masochist.



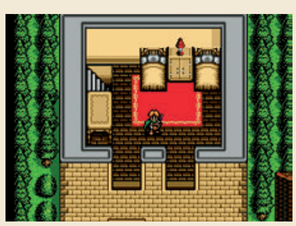
SONIC THE HEDGEHOG

In terms of gameplay we don’t think any sane person could argue with us that Sonic’s adventures were better than Mario’s – however, what those seminal *Sonic* games do they do flawlessly well. *Sonic The Hedgehog* ushered in a new dawn of platform game; an exhilarating dash-and-smash approach that wowed and dazzled like only the very best Sega games do. Following the game’s success, Sonic Team quickly set to work on a sequel, and added a popular sidekick in Tails, a two-player mode and some nifty new moves to Sonic’s action repertoire, producing what many consider the pinnacle of platformers on the Mega Drive.



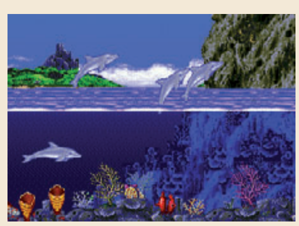
SHINING FORCE

It was a close call between this and *Phantasy Star* but if we had to pick one definitive RPG series on the Mega Drive then the *Shining* series wins by a nose. As one of the earliest examples of the strategy RPG to come to Europe, *Shining Force* and its sequel introduced Mega Drive owners to a whole new way to enjoy the role-playing genre. Taking the tactical gameplay of chess and expanding it into a fantasy environment, with the story and character growth of a *Dungeons & Dragons* game, it mixed several pre-existing elements to make something fresh and interesting. That the series survives 18 years on is testament to its enduring appeal.



ECCO THE DOLPHIN

When poor old Ecco’s pod is mysteriously sucked out of the ocean by a malevolent twister, it falls to the young bottlenose dolphin to uncover what has happened by solving puzzles and interrogating wise schools of fish. *Ecco The Dolphin* boasted some of the most impressive visuals ever seen on Sega’s Mega Drive, but due to the fact that it wasn’t your typical action/adventure game many would sadly pass *Ecco The Dolphin* off as a game for children simply because it featured a cute little dolphin on its box, but those who took the time to scratch at its glorious seabed would find one of the trickiest and most endearing games to find a release on the Mega Drive.



SHINOBI

Joe Musashi had quite a turbulent life on the Mega Drive. First, his wildly popular arcade game never got a Mega Drive release, his brilliant second adventure, *The Revenge Of Shinobi*, had to go though all sorts of revisions when it was released in the US because it had bosses who resembled Spider-Man, Batman, Godzilla, the Hulk and the Terminator, and finally, for the Mega Drive conversion of *Shadow Dancer* poor Joe was forced to replace his own son. Geez! At least Sega made it up to Joe in *Shinobi III: Return Of The Ninja Master*, which included amazing bosses, fantastic horseback and surfing sections and a greater emphasis on moves and combat.









» The brains behind the Sega Mega Drive, Hideki Sato.



“It was great for programming our EA Sports games”



at Apple back in 1979 and after I founded EA we began working with it in 1982. Later the Mac, Amiga, and Atari ST used the MC68000, and so did coin-op arcade games. But all of that equipment was too costly for most consumers. Of course, the Mega Drive also had custom silicon to speed up the graphics and sound. It was a great sprite machine so it was good for programming our EA Sports games. We could use a little bit of 3D for the playing field and then have nicely scaling sprites for the players. It was also plug-and-play and had two joysticks. All of that made up for the limited RAM and lack of read-write storage.”

The Mega Drive offered consumers an affordable way to experience the type of games that were wowing Amiga and Atari ST owners at the time. And thanks to EA's background in software development for home computers, games such as *The Immortal*, *Powermonger* and *Populous* began appearing on the Mega Drive, which would have undoubtedly ensured it wider appeal. It's no coincidence that the Mega Drive was successful in North America and Europe, the two territories where the Amiga and Atari ST were also very popular. But not everyone was as convinced in the all-conquering potential of Sega's 16-bit machine.

“After the Mega Drive debuted in Japan in 1988, I decided to have Electronic Arts bet heavily on it because it just made perfect sense to me,” remembers Hawkins. “But, to be fair, most of the industry and most of the world figured that when Nintendo finally deployed their 16-bit response they would again roll over and crush Sega in their sleep.

In 1990, Tom Kalinske famously took over the presidential reigns of Sega of America and built brilliantly on the promising foundations that Katz had laid down. But while the US climate couldn't be rosier for Sega going into the Nineties, in the Land of the Rising Sun things couldn't have been more different. A dormant leviathan was about to reawaken as Nintendo slovenly entered the 16-bit fray. Backed by two leading Japanese developers, Square and Konami, and with a machine that it was said would blow the competition out of the water, many felt the Mega Drive's days were soon to be numbered. Expectantly, the Mega Drive was hit hard in Japan by the Super Famicom's popularity, but thankfully for Sega, when the time came for Nintendo to release its machine in North America a year later, Sega had gained a considerable lead in the market, and by 1991 the success of the Mega Drive in America was sealed.

Starting out life with the name 'Mr Needle Mouse', a blue hedgehog (in keeping with Sega's corporate colour) belied the most dazzling and slickest platform games ever created, capturing the hearts and minds of an entire generation of gamers. Sonic, as we would come to know him, would become a global superstar and a vital pawn for Sega in the ensuing console war. Despite initial reservations by Sega's American execs (apparently many of them didn't even know what a hedgehog was), the impact that Sonic the Hedgehog would have on the fortunes of the Mega Drive was unprecedented. Not only did Sonic give a face to Sega in the same way that Mario had given one to Nintendo, but the blue blur also stirred imaginations and creativity among developers, and caused many to sit up and take notice of what the Mega Drive was capable of. Shiny Entertainment founder David Perry recalls the first time he

Readers' Comments Favourite Mega Drive Moment

Zerocool
All hell breaking loose on Level 3 of *Strider*, and changing into a werewolf for the first time in *Altered Beast*.

Mike Haggar
Booting up *Sonic* for the first time and hearing 'Seeee-gaaa'.

DPrinny
Playing Master System games on it. Or seeing it getting all its holes filled with useless add-ons and things. It was like some strange kinda orgy.

Havantgottaclue
Buying one in Gamestation in Poole about three years ago and kick-starting my retro-console-collecting fetish.

Lorfarius
The awesome moment while playing *Altered Beast* when you first realise you can change into the werewolf.

psj3809
Beating my best mate on *John Madden Football*! It was the last play of the game, I just threw the ball up and hoped for a bit of luck and somehow my player caught it to win the game on the final play!

Tepid Snake
The Mega Drive is also directly responsible for getting me back into retro gaming – after we sold our first one, I got lucky and found another Asian Mega Drive at a boot fair for £15, and I've been getting the collection back ever since…

Rabiteman
The thrill ride that was *Gunstar Heroes*' Seven Force boss

djcarlos
The first time I summoned the police car in *Streets Of Rage*… mwahahahahahahaha.

timewarpgamer
Plugging the ugly 32X on top of my model one Genesis (in addition to the original Mega-CD expansion), and enjoying *Space Harrier*, *Virtual Racing* and *NBA Jam* for the first time at home. The 32X may have sucked overall, but those titles rocked my console world back then. And they still do.

The Disney Connection

Sega invested a lot to secure big videogame licences, one of which was Disney…

CASTLE OF ILLUSION

With Mario leading the charge for Nintendo, it was obvious that Sega was going to need a pretty big platform star to pull in the kids; and who bigger than Mickey Mouse. The first in a series of surprisingly brilliant Disney-licensed games to appear on the Mega Drive, *Castle Of Illusion* was a sugary platformer with jaw-dropping cartoon graphics and slick animation. It proved an early warning shot to the commercial pull and technical prowess of Sega's machine.



QUACKSHOT

Another Disney classic, this time starring Donald. With an *Indy* theme, *Quackshot* wasn't your typical platformer. While its gameplay still involved lots of running and jumping, progression through the game's stages rested on Donald finding the correct items and using them in the right instances. While it might not sound that impressive today, back then it marked a succinct change to the usual style of action/platformers and led to *Quackshot* getting some pretty high review scores.



FANTASIA

Released to tie in with the operatic Disney feature of the same name, *Fantasia* took one scene from the movie and built a game around it. While it looks great, its visual slickness belies cumbersome gameplay and irksome combat – issues that is are said to have arisen from the game being rushed. It's a shame because it could've made for a fabulous quartet of Mega Drive appearances for Mickey. 'Quartet?' you cry. Lest we forget *Mickey Mania*?



WORLD OF ILLUSION

The natural conclusion for the early wave of Disney-licensed games found Mickey and Donald teaming up in a colourful platformer. As the name suggests, *World Of Illusion* is the sequel to *Castle Of Illusion*, and the gameplay is very similar. The main difference is that *World Of Illusion* is essentially three games in one. You can play out Mickey's adventure, Donald's, or a co-op mission. But it's not a lengthy affair; like all these Disney games, their simplicity and short length let them down.



ever saw Sonic dart through the Day-Glo delights of the Green Hill Zone, a moment he would never forget.

"When I saw Sonic… I really didn't know how the *heck* Yuji Naka managed to get so much out of the hardware?" says Perry. "Who is this guy? It was as fantastic as it was a real kick in the pants. From that point on, we started to think a lot bigger."

The success of *Sonic The Hedgehog*, coupled with the popularity of EA's highly successful sports series and throwing millions of dollars at high-profile endorsements, was enough to see Sega become the 16-bit victor, and by 1992 the company had grown its market share from eight per cent to an astonishing 55 per cent. It had finally toppled Nintendo, taken control of the market and achieved its lofty goal. It was a truly momentous time.

"In retrospect it seemed a little surprising to the folks in the trenches," admits Bayliss. "One day I saw this email from Tom Kalinske announcing a celebration and I was like, 'Huh? We won? When did that happen?' We were so heads down, fighting the fight, we literally didn't notice."

And how did Sega celebrate the auspicious occasion?

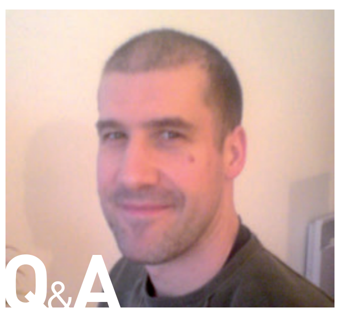
"There was this all-hands company meeting – they had to do it in the parking lot," remembers Bayliss. "We were still in the Shoreway building in Redwood City at the time and there just wasn't enough room indoors. There was a little speechifying and they handed out varsity jackets and watches with Sonic emblazoned on them. Very cool swag. Believe it or not, I still have both."

But Bayliss also reveals that the real impact of that moment actually happened afterwards.

"There was this mood of near zealotry in the company," he says. "Nintendo had been the big dog for a while and we were the scrappy upstarts – well at least we thought of ourselves that way. When we overtook Nintendo of America it kind of kicked us into high gear. For two years, it seemed like we would stop at nothing to put the boot into the Nintendo gang whenever we could. I even remember the original copy for those Mega-CD ads they ran in the 25th anniversary edition of *Rolling Stone*, which specifically took a shot at Nintendo. It was the company jihad."

Nintendo's entrance into the 16-bit market generated the most passionate and high-profile console war ever seen. From boardrooms to playgrounds, the SNES versus Mega Drive conflict, which actually proved mutually beneficial for both parties, became a global maelstrom. It was an exciting time to be playing videogames and just as exciting a period to be making them. The 16-bit era marked a period that saw many precedents set in the industry as the extra power that Sega's Mega Drive and Nintendo's SNES brought to the table spurred many developers to experiment and attempt to push envelopes even further.





Q&A

Paul Davies

Ex-editor of Emap's Computer & Video Games

Retro Gamer: Can you recall the first time you ever saw a Mega Drive running, and what was your first impression of the machine?
Paul Davies: Me and a mate went halves on an import Japanese Mega Drive in 1989. We had no idea what it was capable of other than seeing a couple of screenshots in a *Mean Machines* guide to consoles. We bought it with *Altered Beast* and *Ghouls 'N Ghosts*. We played them both to death! *Ghouls 'N Ghosts* became an obsession. The first game I ever played until 4am without realising what had happened!

RG: What is your all-time favourite Mega Drive game and why?
PD: *Ghouls 'N Ghosts*, because it was so tough but full of great special effects and lots of detail to reward playing through it over, and over, and over…

RG: What is your favourite Sega series and why?
PD: This has to be *Virtua Fighter*. It has such authority now thanks to its flawless history and, despite being spectacular, is also quite graceful in a Zen sort of way. I admire its precision and fluidity. On the Mega Drive? I really enjoyed the *Shining Force* franchise because you could see the game's heroes upgrade their armour and weapons.

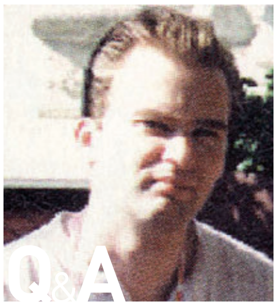
RG: Which game do you feel best took advantage of Sega's machine and why?
PD: *Gunstar Heroes*, without a doubt (almost my favourite game of all time). It was the first, and probably only, game to outperform the Super Nintendo with rotating sprites and a ton of colourful characters on screen. One particular boss – the Seven Force – morphed into amazing forms that included a robot panther thing and a giant automatic pistol. This is one of the greatest 16-bit games ever made, in my opinion.

RG: Why do you think the Mega Drive has remained as popular as it has with gamers?
PD: Almost every new game brought a new idea, especially those games from Treasure (such as *Dynamite Headdy*, and so on). Sega produced some great role-playing games, there were also some awesome shoot-'em-ups such as *Hellfire*, *Zero Wing* and *Bio Hazard Battle* (aka *Crying*). It represents an era when Sega was at its most bold and experimental – some of the Mega-CD games were very ambitious if not always pretty (*Sewer Shark*).

RG: What is your best memory of the Mega Drive?
PD: Taking turns at getting through the shoot-'em-ups with my mates back home. Treating each new game as a real challenge and playing them right to the end without using continues. We even played *Moonwalker* like that. The Mega Drive was my training ground.



Retro Gamer Celebrates The MEGA DRIVE



Richard Leadbetter

Ex-Editor of Emap's Mean Machines Sega

Retro Gamer: Can you recall the first time you ever saw a Mega Drive running, and what was your impression of the machine?
Richard Leadbetter: Yes, the first time I saw the Mega Drive, I was being interviewed for a position on *C&VG* by Julian Rignall. That would've been June 1990. Up until that point, I'd been strictly a C64/Amiga man, and had been put off the consoles after I saw how poor my favourite coin-ops (*OutRun* and *After Burner*) were on the Master System. The first games I saw in EMAP's dingy games room were *Golden Axe* and *After Burner*. Both were still some way off arcade perfect, but both were a clear leap ahead of the conversions I was playing on the Amiga. I think it was when I saw *Super Shinobi* (*Revenge Of Shinobi* in the West) that I realised that we were looking at a truly phenomenal machine.

RG: What is your all-time favourite Mega Drive game and why?
RL: Treasure's *Gunstar Heroes* is probably my favourite. It oozes playability and is technically unbelievable, but more importantly, this game represents Treasure at its height, almost literally exploding with pure creativity. *Dynamite Headdy* is another solid-gold classic almost as good as *Gunstar Heroes*.

RG: What is your favourite Sega series and why?
RL: The problem with all the Sega series (certainly on Mega Drive) comes down to the fact that pretty much all of them declined, sometimes rapidly. *Sonic 3* wasn't a patch on its predecessor, or indeed, *Sonic CD*. In fact, even today, the franchise is now a bit of a joke. *Streets Of Rage* is another series that disappointed badly after the brilliant second game. Even *Ecco The Dolphin* had *Ecco Jr*.

RG: Which game do you feel best took advantage of the machine and why?
RL: Treasure and Konami really pushed the hardware with games like *Castlevania*, *Contra*/*Probotector*, *Gunstar Heroes*, *Dynamite Headdy* and *Alien Soldier*. These games were massively more advanced than their equivalents earlier on in the console's life cycle. Outside of Japanese releases, the *Vectorman* titles were also quite, quite awesome, and while the gameplay wasn't exactly top-notch, the Dave Perry games like *Terminator*, *Cool Spot*, *Global Gladiators* and the likes were also great showcases for the Mega Drive. I think *Ranger X* deserves a special mention – the Mega Drive has quite a limited colour palette, but that game switched the palette so rapidly that to the human eye it looked as though the game was more vibrant and colourful than any other. *Virtua Racing* also deserves a special mention of course, the only Mega Drive title to run with custom hardware inside the cart. Compare and contrast with the Super Nintendo, where tons of the games were boosted with custom chips as a matter of course.

RG: Why do you think it has remained so popular with gamers?
RL: I'd say that there are a couple of reasons behind this. We saw Sega at its creative high points during the 2D era, and the games still stand up pretty well today – which is how Sega can get away with emulated *Sonic* and *Streets Of Rage* games on Xbox Live Arcade. But there was also the fact that the console was such a huge sales success. It brought about a volume of titles that ensured that everyone had a favourite, or a nostalgic game experience they can still relate to.

RG: What is your best memory of the machine?
RL: I think it must've been when Sega sent over a *Sonic 2* cartridge to the *Mean Machines* office. The way things worked back then you'd get sent a whole bunch of flashed ROMs you'd need to stick into a cart-shaped motherboard that slotted into the console. The anticipation back then was immense, and it was superb to see the game actually living up to – and surpassing – the expectation. Of course, next morning, when the chips went missing and we almost called the police, that wasn't particularly fun. Thankfully it was just an over-enthusiastic staff member who was late to work…



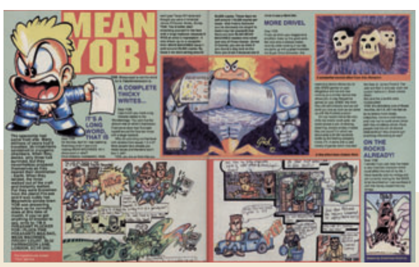
» With the recent release of the new *Rambo* coin-op, Sega's relationship with the bullet-swallowing soldier spans an impressive 21 years.

"We had some fun times," recalls Perry. "Like *Terminator* was probably one of the first photoreal games, meaning it's actually us (the developers) photographed, scanned and used in the animations. And *Global Gladiators* was probably one of the first Mega Drive games with 'real' sampled musical instruments. It took a lot of memory and most developers wouldn't give the audio guy that much space. But it was Tommy Tallarico and he was keen to push the limits, so I gave him the space and he just went crazy. I think he got an award for that."

The early-Nineties marked such a great time to be a gamer. It was a period where everything felt bold, new and exciting. The great 16-bit console war between Nintendo and Sega had brought gamers together and pushed videogames further into the public eye. From *Sonic 2* to *Super Mario World*, *Street Fighter II* to Sega's gore-ticking port of *Mortal Kombat*, with every new high-profile release the continual tipping of the scales was almost tangible. It was a fertile and memorable time with everybody from gamers to journalists to developers staunchly picking a side to see how the battle would play out.

"Generally you were on one side of the fence or the other," remembers Perry. "The machines were similar, but with enough differences to divide programmers into two camps. I was one of the early developers on the Mega Drive, I got the original badly translated manuals from Japan and quickly fell in love with the hardware. This was one of the last series of machines where you were responsible for everything going on inside the machine. We programmed 100 per cent assembly language and pushed it to its limit. That was *fun*!"

And apart from the obvious early licensing deal that was struck between Sega and EA, what else drew Trip Hawkins to side with Sega and the Mega Drive?







The Capcom Connection
Some of Capcom's best-loved arcade conversions on the Mega Drive

STRIDER
Strider is by far one of the most popular arcade conversions to ever appear on the Mega Drive, and at a colossal 8MB, it was also one of the largest earlier Sega carts, too. As a result, the acrobatic wall-affixing Strider Hiryu helped shift plenty of Mega Drive units for Sega on its release. Sadly though, US Gold's Mega Drive sequel, *Strider Returns*, failed to live up the brilliance of its predecessor – although it hasn't affected Darran's worrying love for the ninja.



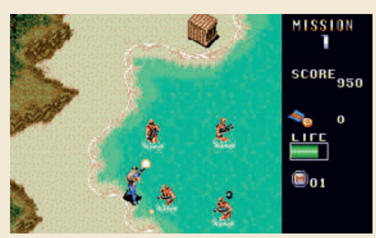
GHOULS 'N GHOSTS
For a time *Ghouls 'N Ghosts* stood as the quintessential platform game for Sega's machine – not surprising when you consider it was programmed by Yuji Naka; the programming talent behind *Sonic The Hedgehog*. While the game is terribly unforgiving, Naka did at least do Mega Drive owners the courtesy of making this version easier than Capcom's devilish arcade game. *Ghouls 'N Ghosts* is a solid conversion of the classic coin-op, and a must for any Mega Drive collection.



FORGOTTEN WORLDS
Forgotten Worlds forms the final game in Capcom's *Jetpac Hero* series; a trio of games which also include *Section-Z* and *Side Arms Hyper Dyne*. Beginning life in the arcades, *Forgotten Worlds* found two nameless musclemen fighting an evil alien race. Armed with bad dialogue and a cannon that could be spun 360 degrees, our heroes were tasked with slaying gargantuan bosses against a thumping rock soundtrack. The Mega Drive is home to the best conversion, too.



MERCS
The sequel to Capcom's run-'n'-gun classic *Commando* was a curious conversion. With multiplayer annoyingly ousted, Sega decided to gear the game around the single-player experience and stop the potential street riots by including two versions of the game. The first is a straightforward port of the arcade game, while the all-new brilliant Original mode had the player fighting through seven new stages and freeing Mercs, which then became playable. Good one, Sega!







The Treasure Connection

Wowing gamers, Treasure created some of the best games on the Mega Drive

GUNSTAR HEROES

Few companies have debuted with a game as spectacular as *Gunstar Heroes*. Made up of disgruntled Konami employees, Treasure's first game set an impossibly high standard of innovative gameplay and astonishing visuals that became a standard for the company for years to come. Mixing the hardcore blasting of the *Contra* series with a wicked dose of humour, *Gunstar Heroes* is a frantic, rollercoaster ride of a game that stills plays brilliantly today. Little wonder then that it had a compilation named after it in Japan.



MCDONALD'S TREASURE LAND ADVENTURE

Trust Treasure to take a licence based on a burger chain and actually turn it into a bloody good game. While it lacks the depth of other Treasure titles, *McDonald's Treasure Land Adventure* is still head and shoulders above similar licences and proves that it's possible to make a great game out of anything. Yes, it's rather bland for a Treasure game, but it remains a beautiful-looking title that definitely deserves more recognition. Just don't confuse it with *Mick & Mack: Global Gladiators*.



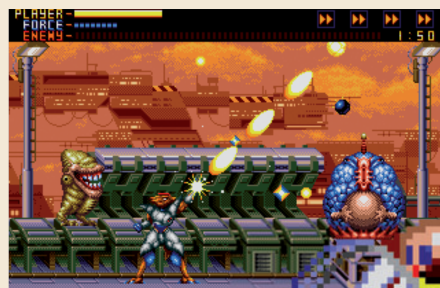
DYNAMITE HEADDY

If *McDonald's Treasure Land Adventure* showed us the business side of Treasure, then this utterly nutty platformer released a year later proved that its surreal sense of humour was still well and truly intact. With its gaudy visuals, huge bosses and hardcore action, *Dynamite Headdy* was a return to the Treasure that had made its name with *Gunstar Heroes* and delivered an unforgettable protagonist who had a different head for seemingly any occasion. Why he's never appeared in a sequel we'll never know.



ALIEN SOLDIER

As well as being noted for their amazing aesthetics and exceedingly clever gameplay, many Treasure games have also made a name for themselves due to their insane toughness. *Alien Soldier* is no different and we're ashamed to admit that even now, some 14 years after its original release, we've never completed it on a single credit. Effectively little more than a boss rush (a format Treasure is rather fond of), *Alien Soldier* remains one of the company's most challenging games. We still love it though.







"I think everyone knows by now that we had a better deal with Sega, but EA put plenty of games on the SNES," he says. "The reality is that Sega got to market much earlier and they had a better machine. Nintendo lost time because they were trying to make the SNES backwards compatible. This resulted in the poor choice of the 65010 processor that could run the 6502 instruction set. But they never got it to work. What you ended up with was a slower machine with baggage that it was lugging around that had no purpose. The SNES did have more colours but it animated too slowly, so who cared about the extra colours?"

Selling an astonishing 30 million units, the Mega Drive was the most important console Sega released in its 21 or so years period in the videogame hardware market. It marks a period of dizzying and magnificent heights that the company would never quite reach again. But while the Mega Drive can be attributed to Sega's successes it can also be entwined in the company's protracted departure from the hardware market. When Sega looked to extend the life of the Mega Drive with two life-support add-ons – the Mega-CD and 32X, it would prove a damaging and costly misstep for the company. While the add-ons brought with them some fantastic and ambitious titles, such as the astonishing delights of *Sonic CD*, *Sylpheed*, *Jurassic Park*, *Star Wars Arcade* and *Virtua Racing Deluxe*, the quantity of must-have games just wasn't there – and in the case of the 32X almost nonexistent. Many of the games that appeared on the Mega-CD were spruced up carryovers from the Mega Drive as developers hurried to get games to the platform quickly, and the public were quick to realise. This would have a seriously damaging effect on Sega's strong corporate image and also lead to a loss of confidence among the loyal customer base the Mega Drive had built up for Sega.

"Companies feel like they have to try to extend the life of a great brand with these kinds of gimmicks," explains Hawkins. "The Mega Drive had only 128KB of RAM. Realistically, the Mega Drive could not pretend to be 32-bit when there was nothing 32-bit about it. And it could not rationally use CD storage without much more memory and a completely different architecture."

With the recently released *Mega Drive Ultimate Collection* riding high in the software charts at the moment, it's clear that the Mega Drive has kept its fair share of fans and followers after Sega eventually pulled the plug on the console. And with a dedicated community across the web, and the impressive quality of homebrew efforts such as *Beggar Prince* and *Pier Solar* reminding us of how accessible a platform the Mega Drive is to program for, it looks like Sega's 16-bit saviour will continue to remain in our minds for many more generations and console wars to come.



Retro Gamer Celebrates The

MEGA DRIVE



Q&A

We caught up with Ethan Einhorn (producer, Sega of America), and Max Fitzmaurice (producer, Backbone Entertainment) to ask them about the new Sega Mega Drive Ultimate Collection for the PS3 and Xbox 360, and to find out whether we could expect to see any more classic Sega games making a comeback



This is the second Sega compilation you've released in the last few years – you obviously have a love for these games?

Ethan: The very first job I had was at a Dairy Queen when I was 15, and the very first paycheck I received went towards the purchase of a Genesis with *Altered Beast* packed in. From then, I amassed as many Genesis carts as my meagre budget would allow – my favourites back in the day were *Sonic The Hedgehog*, *Strider*, *Castle Of Illusion Starring Mickey Mouse* and *Phantasy Star IV*.

Max: This is the first Sega compilation I've been fortunate enough to work on, but it's true, I do have a lot of love for these games. I remember staying up all night to finish the various games of the time and getting yelled at the next day for sleeping until three o'clock in the afternoon. Having friends over and challenging each other to get higher scores or go further in whichever game we were playing. My favourites from that era are *Sonic The Hedgehog*, *Columns*, *Comix Zone* and *Streets Of Rage II*.

Why do you think the Sega Mega Drive has continued to be so popular, even today?

Ethan: Many of these games really are timeless. *Sonic The Hedgehog* in particular is as fun today as it was in the Nineties. The 16-bit era represented the apex of 2D game development – there are so many true classics from that period. And nostalgia is a powerful lure. When I hear the music from Green Hill Zone, I feel like I'm staying up late on a school night all over again.

Max: A former employer of mine used to say: "If it was cool 16 years ago, it's cool again…" I feel it's the nature of things from your past. You revisit the era when you pick up something from back in the day and, for the moment at least, you're there again. The best part is, with videogames anyway, so many of them are still as good as you remember.

Who decides what games get included in each compilation?

Ethan: Sega decides this in the end, but Backbone Entertainment's passion for specific games – *Shinobi* arcade comes to mind – ensured that some titles that might not have made it stayed in there. Our aim on the *Ultimate Mega Drive Collection* was to provide the best possible collection of top-tier games while staying under the 50-title mark.

Max: Like Ethan said, Sega decides in the end, but we get input from all over the place. For this collection in particular, we even went to the forums and [looked at] comments from the previous collections to see what fans wanted. Obviously, not everything they wanted was possible, but we feel the titles that were chosen make up a very solid collection.

Is there any reason why we didn't get the original arcade versions of *After Burner* and *OutRun*?

Ethan: Even when you pack a disc full of nearly 50 games, we've learned that it's not possible to satisfy the needs of all players. Those are great games, and it wouldn't surprise me if they showed up on compilations in the future.

Max: They're great games, no doubt. Like Ethan says, I wouldn't be surprised if we saw them in a future collection – maybe one focused on more of the arcade titles.

With the storage capacity of Blu-ray allowing more space, do you think we could eventually see a Mega-CD and/or Sega Saturn compilation in the future?

Ethan: In those instances, it's not a matter of storage space, it's a matter of emulation. We simply did not have the time to integrate Mega-CD emulation in this collection (though it was discussed). And to put out a Mega-CD release on its own – even adding 32X

"Our biggest challenge was choosing which games to include in the collection"



games – I think the number of true classics on hand would be pretty limited. As for Saturn, I would love to see a collection from that platform, but it's by far the hardest Sega hardware to emulate. Note that on *Panzer Dragoon Orta* (Xbox), the unlockable version of the original *Panzer Dragoon* was the PC version, not the Saturn version. You also have to consider that first generation 3D games simply don't age as gracefully as the 2D Mega Drive games.

How long did the *Ultimate Collection* take to complete and did you encounter any problems while making it?
Max: It's hard to quantify just how long it took to make the title. Should we include all the time from when we first started creating the Mega Drive emulator or just what we did for the *Ultimate Mega Drive Collection*? However, to keep things simple, on top of all the previous work done to emulate the Mega Drive we put about nine months into the additional pieces that make up the *Ultimate Mega Drive Collection*. As for any issues, all projects have challenges, but with the *Ultimate Mega Drive Collection* our biggest challenge was choosing which games to include.

What are your favourite games on the compilation and why?
Ethan: *Sonic The Hedgehog*, *Streets Of Rage II*, *Phantasy Star IV*, *Ristar*, *Beyond Oasis* and *Shining Force II*. All six of these games have aged beautifully. I'm also surprised by how much I'm enjoying *Fatal Labyrinth*, which I missed out on in the Nineties.
Max: *Sonic The Hedgehog*, *Streets Of Rage II*, *Comix Zone*, *Ristar*, *Vectorman*, and *Shinobi III*. All of the games I've just listed represent some of the best 2D gameplay out there. To this day, I still enjoy playing them.



Are there any games/features that didn't make it into the pack and, if so, what were the reasons?
Ethan: We were given direction from upstairs not to cross the 50 game barrier, but we got as close to that number as possible. We dropped some of the less-than-stellar titles from the prior collection (*Ecco Jr.*, *Sword Of Vermilion*), in favour of new entries. Licensing was an obstacle for several highly requested games, such as the *ToeJam & Earl* games. *Eternal Champions* had age rating issues, due to the finishing moves.





What would you say to those gamers who feel that there isn't enough new stuff on this compilation when compared to your PSP/PS2 pack?
Ethan: This is the only compilation where you can get all of the *Phantasy Star*, *Streets Of Rage*, *Sonic The Hedgehog* and *Shining Force* Mega Drive games in one collection. When you add to that list classic arcade games like *Space Harrier* and *Shinobi*, novelties like *Golden Axe Warrior*, and fan favourites like *Dynamite Headdy*, I think the new collection is great value, even if you did pick up the prior pack. Beyond that, we're proud of the way Achievements and Trophies are integrated to create an all-new meta-game. Many players have been able to get all of the Achievements (or Trophies) in about six hours of play time.
Max: To be honest, outside of Japan, I feel like this is the best Sega collection to date. Even when you consider the games that are being released for a second, third or whatever time, you're still getting these games at about 50p each, and like Ethan says, so many of them haven't been seen together before.

Why are titles like *ToeJam & Earl, Gunstar Heroes, OutRun, Super Monaco GP, Chakan, Revenge Of Shinobi* and many other first-party Sega releases not included in the pack?
Ethan: Licensing issues, across the board. In some instances, we didn't have the character rights, in others, we didn't have music rights. In the case of *Revenge Of Shinobi*, the original designers had integrated some cheeky 'lookalike' enemies, which make that game particularly problematic to bring back.

The pack contains a complete series of *Sonic, Streets Of Rage* and *Vectorman* games, among others, whose idea was it to include complete sets of games in the pack?
Ethan: Sega decided that one. Don't forget that we added the Sega Master System *Phantasy Star I* to complete that series, too!
Max: Yeah, that one was all Ethan. Once the idea was brought to the table, who could say it wasn't a good plan?



Are you planning to adapt any more Mega Drive titles to either PSN or Xbox Live Arcade?
Ethan: You'll have to wait and see.

Are there currently any plans to bring the collection to the Wii?
Ethan: There are no plans for a Wii version at this time, but many of the best games in the collection are also available through the Wii's Virtual Console.

THE MAKING OF…

S.T.U.N. RUNNER

Arcade fans who thought the likes of Out Run were fast, got a rude awakening when faced with guiding a Spread Tunnel Underground Network Runner along 23 perilous tracks at 900mph. Ed Rotberg and Andrew Burgess reveal to **Craig Grannell** the secrets behind the lightning-fast racer/blaster hybrid



IN THE KNOW



- » **PUBLISHER:** ATARI GAMES
- » **DEVELOPER:** IN-HOUSE
- » **RELEASED:** 1989
- » **PLATFORM:** ARCADE (LATER CONVERTED OVER TO VARIOUS HOME SYSTEMS)
- » **GENRE:** SURVIVAL/RACING/SHOOT-'EM-UP
- » **EXPECT TO PAY:** £500+ FOR AN ORIGINAL CAB

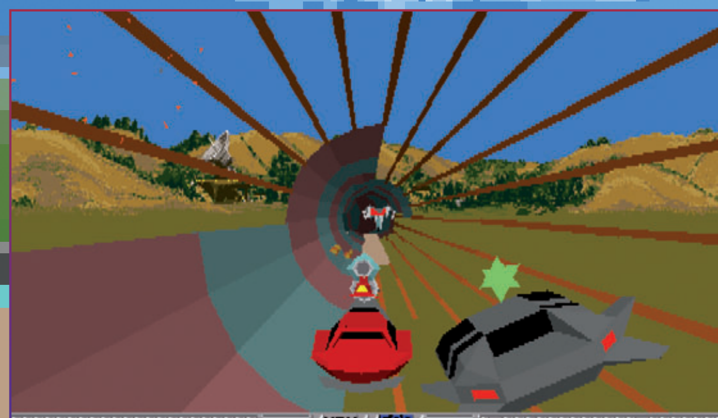


» Boom! One enemy down, forty billion to go.



» An open flat – an opportunity to increase your speed and make up some of that time.





Some gaming experiences stay with you forever. Back when Retro Gamer was a younger beast, we chanced upon *S.T.U.N. Runner* in an arcade (of sorts) in Florida, forlornly lurking among several broken, unloved cabs. The midday heat was unbearable, but that was soon forgotten as 25 cents provided access to the Spread Tunnel Underground Network, and a sled-like Runner that pelted along 23 futuristic tracks at breakneck speed.

Often mistaken for a racing game, *S.T.U.N. Runner* is actually more about survival, as you fly along against the clock, bobsleigh-style, using basic physics to attain the fastest speed through tunnels and over the open 'flats', straining for 'boosts' before they flash past, avoiding or blasting foes, and coping with ramps that catapult your craft over powerless areas of the tunnel network still under construction.

Like many Atari games, *S.T.U.N. Runner* arrived from a brainstorming session, and lead designer Ed Rotberg remembers that the basic concept had been knocking about the company for years. "Owen Rubin had been trying to do this game called *Tube Chase* with raster graphics and then vectors, but got nowhere," he says. "It was sort of like running down a tube and shooting things – a much simpler version of what *S.T.U.N. Runner* is. He got a variant of some hardware that was used for *Missile Command*, made some custom changes, completed his game and sold it to Exidy as *Vertigo*. But the thought remained about racing on something like a subway tube really, really fast, and how you could implement that."

Fast-forward to the late-Eighties and *Hard Drivin'* entered the picture, with high-performance polygonal hardware. "Someone brought the hardware and subway tube idea up during the brainstorming session, and everything fell into place, evolving into the basis for *S.T.U.N. Runner*," says Ed, who was particularly eager to take the project on. A team was duly assembled, including Andrew Burgess, Jed Margolin and Sam Comstock.

Ed reveals that the concept appealed, which is why he was so keen to be involved. "I've always loved doing 3D stuff, and I'd worked on *Hard Drivin'*, which was kind of a simulator for driving a car, with lots of physics simulation to make it behave like a car," he says. "But I wanted to go way faster!" He recalls experiencing flying simulators, which offered speed, but lacked a good point of reference – tiny objects suddenly zoomed by, meaning you ran into things absurdly quickly. "I wanted something that really emphasised speed, but that could be controlled," he says. Andrew was similarly excited, with the game being his first: "I thought the concept was cool, especially the powerless track sections. I'd always liked driving simulation games, and here I was getting to help create one!"

The central idea of speed is what Ed reckons pulled in punters and left a mark on gamers' memories: "*S.T.U.N. Runner* gave an adrenaline rush because it offered speed and an experience you couldn't get from other games." And it was also a simple game to get to grips with, due to its easily learned 'quasi physics' and use of a user-friendly variant of the Bradley Trainer controller on the cabinet.

Although the initial speed rush was the hook, other things kept gamers engrossed. "*S.T.U.N. Runner* has a lot of normal gameplay elements with power-ups, and an 'if it walks, kills or flies, it dies' approach – just shoot everything you can – which is always a visceral rush," says Ed. "But it also has



DEVELOPER HIGHLIGHTS

BLASTEROIDS
SYSTEM: ARCADE
YEAR: 1987

HARD DRIVIN' (PICTURED)
SYSTEM: ARCADE
YEAR: 1988

HYDRA
SYSTEM: ARCADE
YEAR: 1990



THE MAKING OF…

S.T.U.N. RUNNER

CONVERSION CAPERS



S.T.U.N. Runner's sheer speed meant home conversions at the time were an impossible prospect – most were abject failures. An exception was the Lynx version, which against the odds provided a surprisingly faithful sprite-based *S.T.U.N. Runner*. "Rob Zdybel did that one," remembers Ed. "I talked to him when he was working on it and thought the end result was pretty cool."

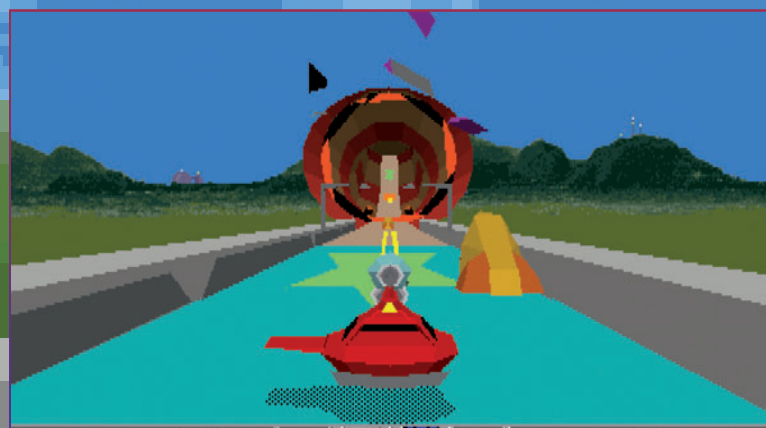
More surprising is how modern versions have fared poorly, such as the *Midway Arcade Treasures 3* Xbox/PlayStation 2 release, with its obvious slowdown. "Maybe they tried emulating it from the original ROMs," suggests Ed. "I don't know why they didn't just rewrite it – *S.T.U.N. Runner*'s not a complicated game, and they could easily have extracted the tunnel data, converted the graphic objects into a modern format, and done it that way. I guess they were under severe time constraints or thought it'd just be cheaper to emulate."

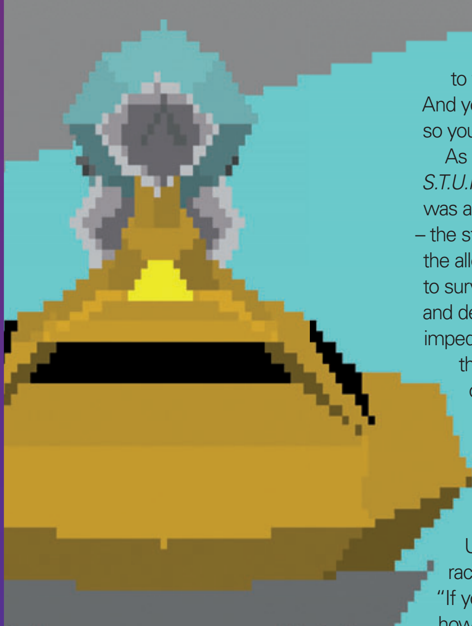


» The smart-bomb-like Shockwave travels rapidly along the tunnel walls, blowing up unsuspecting foes.



» The four-by-fours of the *S.T.U.N. Runner* world block your path and are impervious to your guns.





you thinking about just getting through a tunnel to get to the next one and repair your vehicle… And you've gotta keep your vehicle together, so you can survive."

As touched on earlier, survival is really *S.T.U.N. Runner*'s key component. "That was always the idea: getting from 'point A' – the start – to 'point B' – the finish – within the allotted time," says Andrew. "You have to survive, driving along the optimal path, and destroy or avoid other vehicles which impede your progress." However, Ed says that although you're racing against the clock more than anything else, and that *S.T.U.N. Runner* "is a survival game much more than a racing game", you still need racing skills to succeed. This is particularly apparent on the final level, the Ultimate Challenge, which combines racing and endurance in peerless fashion. "If you get to the last level, it's all about how far you can get, to determine where you get to put your name within it," explains Ed.

"You can see exactly how far other players have managed to go, and to my knowledge this was the first time positional markers were used in a 3D world to mark player achievements. I kind of like that!"

Of course, unless you cheat in the likes of MAME, getting to that final level is a major undertaking. *S.T.U.N. Runner*'s levels aren't for the faint-hearted – to beat the tough time limits, you need to know every track's nuances, and take advantage of the 'boosts' sprinkled about. "The hard part was designing the levels and getting the game's feel right," considers Ed. "Once you've got a game working – got your collision detection done, got your physics right – it's mostly about designing levels and making it fun."

Regarding the game's feel, Ed reckons *S.T.U.N. Runner* succeeds due to its simplification. "On starting the game, I said the physics was going to have a very loose connection with reality – it just had to feel fun doing whatever you were doing," he says. "I thought if I wanted to swing round the top of a tunnel, I had to be able to, and then I had to feel gravity pulling me down, but not so hard that I lost control or so slow that it was boring. A lot of this was tuning and tweaking. The game was tuned to the way it felt good to me and some others in the lab, and that's all you can do…"

We mention this approach reminds us of **Retro Gamer** favourite *OutRun 2*, and Ed notes that even the best early racers favoured 'feel' over 'realism': "Look at *Sprint 2* – there was no commitment to reality. You had a steering wheel that you could spin around, and you could put these cars in a slide. What you'd learn is how the game wanted you to behave to affect that outcome – it wasn't an attempt to simulate the method as much as the result."

As for level design, although Ed provided plenty of input, Andrew was largely responsible for that aspect of the game. "Along with the AI for most of the ground-based vehicles, I designed 18 of the 23 tracks, and implemented them all using a 'tunnel building' tool that I created," he says. "The trick was in balancing the layout of the track, the number of computer-controlled vehicles, and their aggressive behaviour whenever your vehicle went near to them."

During development, key components were added to the mix of tunnel networks. "When we started taking the game apart and tweaking it, we learned pretty quickly



» Ramps fling your Runner skywards, enabling you to avoid incomplete sections of the tunnel network.



» The walls of the stunning Outer Drive level are transparent, providing you with a view of outer space.





that we had to teach people how to drive," laughs Ed. "The game wasn't intuitive enough, and so we added stars on the first level, where you gain points for running over as many as you can – this teaches people to use the hot spots and about the fastest path along tunnels." And despite most of the game taking place underground, it offers occasional respite in the form of exhilarating sections known as 'flats', resembling a kind of ultra-violent, futuristic *Power Drift*, with undulating roads and plentiful foes. "Those sections were added because the game got claustrophobic, although the gameplay on the flats is more restricted, because you can only move from side to side," says Ed. He adds that these sections did provide benefits, though, notably in enabling the team to include more flying enemies.

For Ed, the ability to chop and change the game during development was extremely important, and he fondly remembers the days when videogame development was a more organic process. "I liken it to a story that grows in the telling," he says, suggesting that today's games are, by comparison, hindered by everything being planned in advance. Ed continues: "Back in the old days, the game itself told you what was fun about it, and you just had to listen.

"Often mistaken for a racing game, S.T.U.N. Runner is actually more about survival"

If something wasn't fun, it was a matter of abandoning the path, going back a bit and doing something else. But if you planned everything in advance and found out right at the end that something wasn't fun, you'd wasted a whole lot of time."

Ed admits plenty of games were killed, simply due to not being fun enough, but just as often, they'd start designing something that didn't work overall but had a really enjoyable component. "You could then rework everything and take the game in that direction," he says.

As the interview draws to a close, we wonder if there are any final thoughts – overriding memories or things that could have been done differently with *S.T.U.N. Runner*. "Wow, that's a tricky one," says Andrew, "but this was my very first videogame and so just seeing it come to life was incredible. There were late nights debugging and redesigning vehicle AI, and then there's the day I got to watch the assembly line churning out *S.T.U.N. Runner* games." However, Andrew's top moment occurred on vacation in Florida right after *S.T.U.N. Runner* started shipping: "I went into an arcade in Orlando and there was a *S.T.U.N. Runner* with this little girl playing it, turning the steering wheel this way and that, 'oohing' and 'aahing' as she battled the game. It was such a high seeing someone enjoy something I'd worked on."

Ed mentions a favourite moment elsewhere (see 'Kiss And Tell' boxout), and admits that although he was happy with how the game turned out, there are things he'd change, given the chance. "I'd have liked to have done a whole lot more with level design to make the game more naturally progressive and challenging," he says. "There are places where *S.T.U.N. Runner* has alternative tunnels, and I'd have loved a Swiss cheese level, where you avoid suicidal drones by turning off tunnels, stopping the drones coming back on to the path you've chosen… There are always myriad things you can do to make things better, but at some point you have to shoot the engineer and shut the project!"

KISS AND TELL



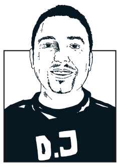
As with all games, *S.T.U.N. Runner*'s development had its memorable moments, although an amusing one sticks in Ed's mind. "I don't know how racy we can get in this interview," he says. "I don't know how much you remember about the ending, but if you get to the last level and get on the high-score table, a girl hops on to the S.T.U.N. Runner with you and you ride off towards the horizon. If you don't make the high-score table, she walks over and kisses you on the cheek, complete with kissing noises. The first time this was attempted, Andrew got the positioning of the kiss wrong to humorous effect… I'll just leave it at that!"

SABOTEUR!

SOFTLY, SOFTLY, DEATH IS COMING



- » **PUBLISHER:** DURELL SOFTWARE LIMITED
- » **RELEASED:** 1986
- » **GENRE:** ACTION
- » **FEATURED HARDWARE:** ZX SPECTRUM
- » **EXPECT TO PAY:** £1+



HISTORY

Is it just me or do games with exclamation marks at the end of their titles sound far more exciting and dramatic than those that go without?

Not to be confused with Epyx's *Impossible Mission* or even the Beastie Boys' *Sabotage* for that matter, *Saboteur!* is a resoundingly solid romp from Durell that took elements of the aforementioned Epyx hit, but added a typically gritty British spin.

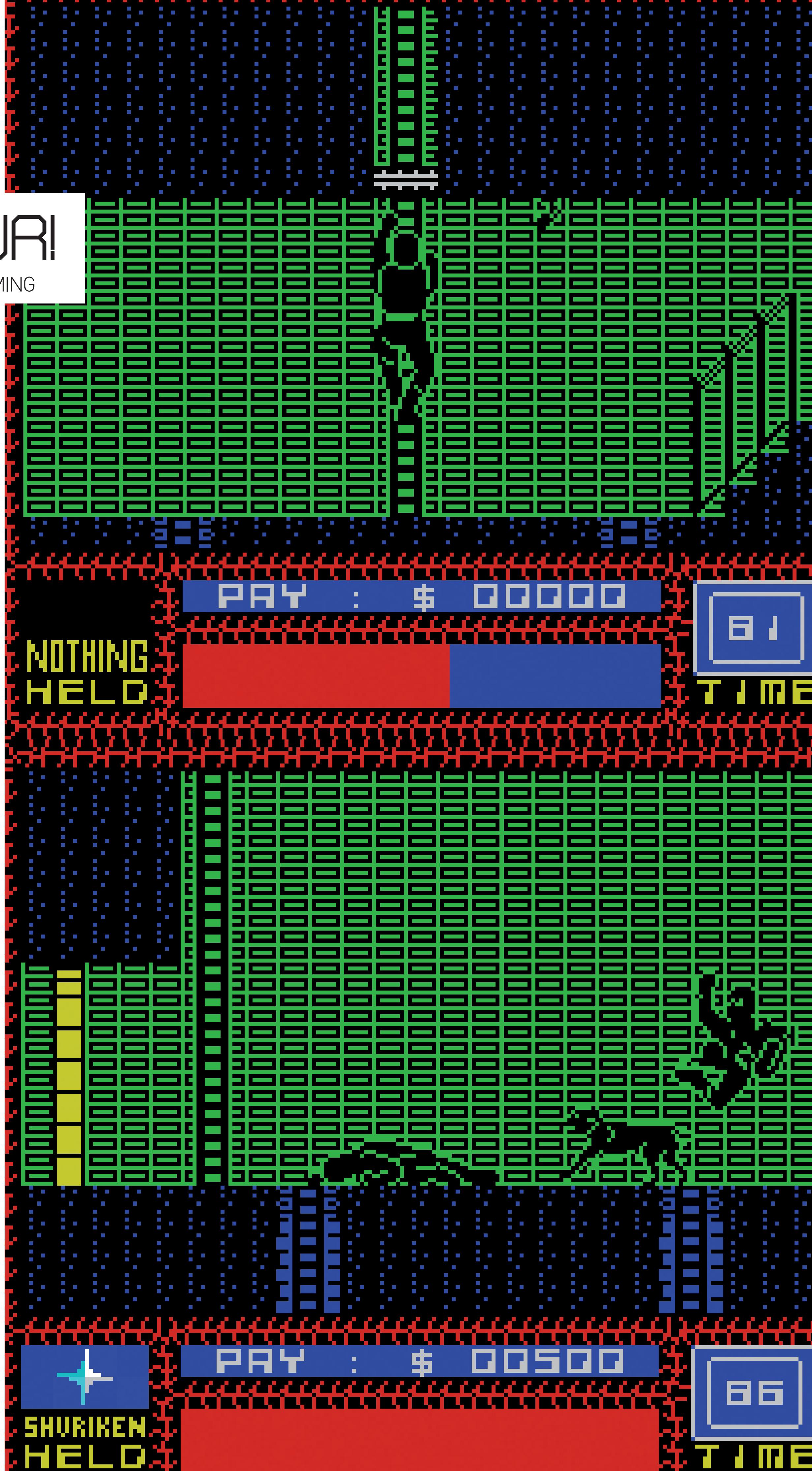
The deadly droids of Atombender's bunker were instead replaced by vicious guard dogs and karate-kicking guards, and your actual task was far easier than Agent 4125's, as all you had to worry about was retrieving a single disk.

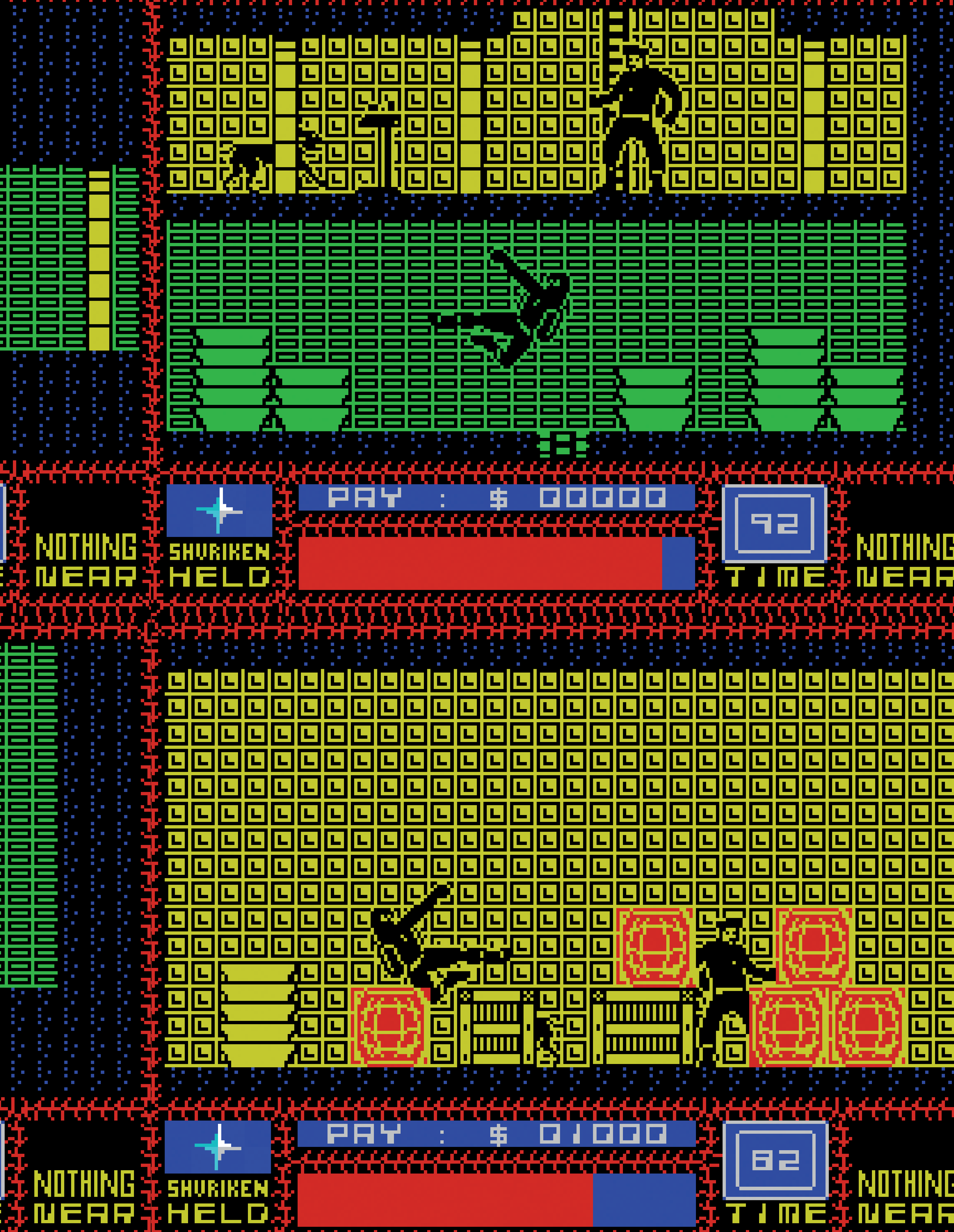
"What do you mean, you also have to plant a bomb and escape before it blows up?" Hmmm. Maybe things weren't so easy after all…

They weren't easy, as a total of 137 screens stood between you and your goal. Starting off on a rubber dinghy, you had to enter the huge, multi-screen complex, seek out that troublesome disk, plant your bomb and escape via a conveniently placed helicopter. Yes, it was certainly tricky – unless like me you settled for always playing on the lowest difficulty setting – but *Saboteur!* was a damn-fine-looking game.

Indeed, load it up today and the first thing that will strike you about it is just how funky the game still looks. The sprites themselves are not only huge in size, but are all beautifully animated, while there's not a hint of colour clash to be seen. This was impossibly slick stuff back in the day and a sweet payoff for those Spectrum owners who had been disappointed with their own conversion of *Impossible Mission*, which, while perfectly adequate, wasn't really a patch on the stellar Commodore 64 original.

Saboteur II may have been a far more ambitious game – both in size and what you were able to do – but I greatly prefer the Spectrum original, and not just because it uses an exclamation mark.

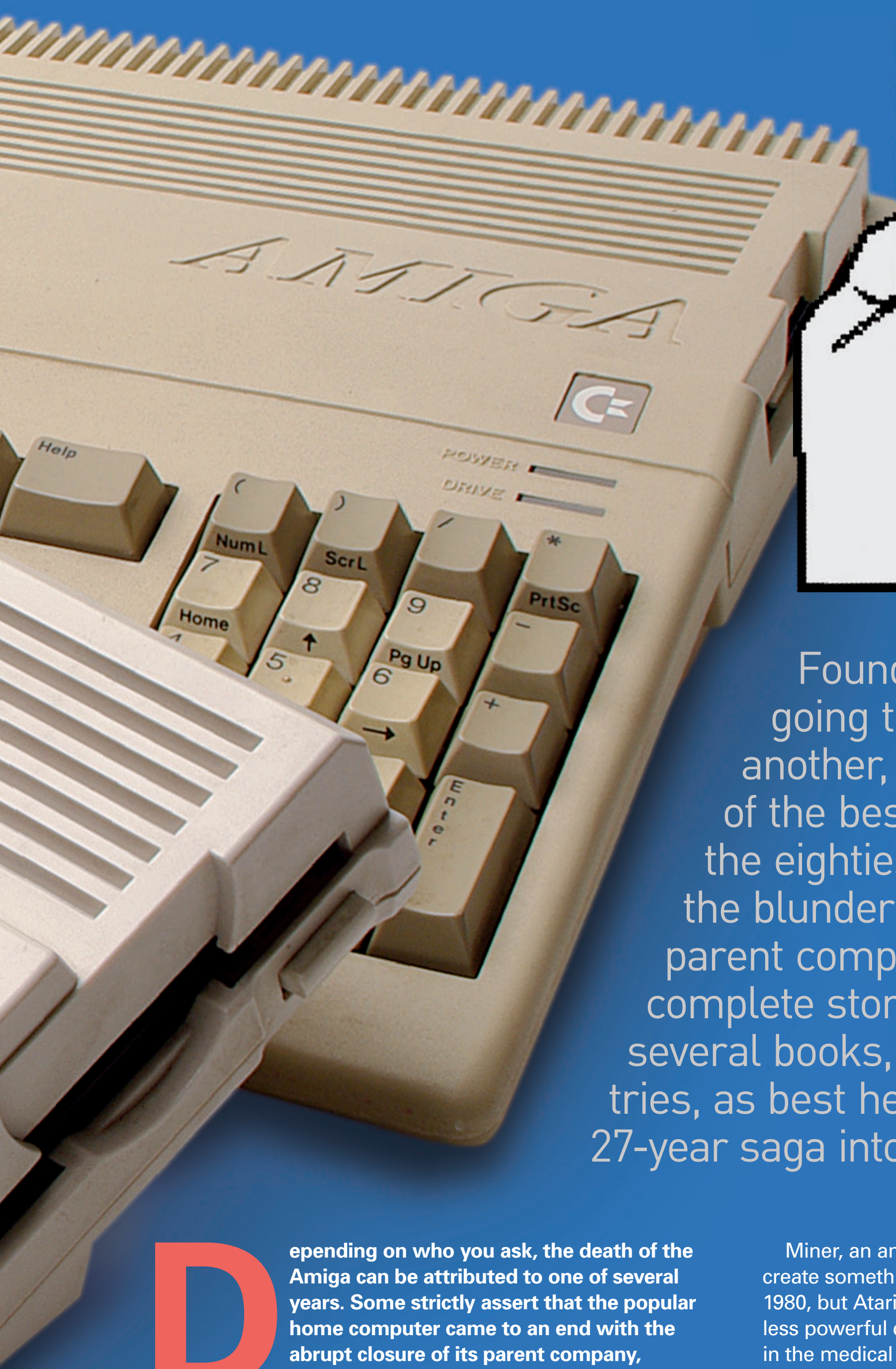




NOTHING
NEAR
SHURIKEN
HELD
PAY : $ 00000
92
TIME
NOTHING
NOTHING
NEAR
SHURIKEN
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82
TIME
NOTHING


Commodore
A1200
AMIGA
H. DISK
F. DISK
POWER

AMIGA SPECIAL





Founded in 1982 and still going today, in one way or another, Amiga created some of the best loved computers of the eighties and nineties, despite the blunders of its most famous parent company, Commodore. The complete story of Amiga could fill several books, but here Ashley Day tries, as best he can, to fit the whole 27-year saga into just eight pages…

Depending on who you ask, the death of the Amiga can be attributed to one of several years. Some strictly assert that the popular home computer came to an end with the abrupt closure of its parent company, Commodore, in 1994. Some cite the closure of the last commercial Amiga magazine, *Amiga Format*, in 2000 as the truest sign of the computer's demise. A select group of faithful fans, meanwhile, simply cannot let go and would remind you that the Amiga brand itself is very much alive and well and that a new line of hardware will emerge when the time is right. Indeed, it's almost impossible to definitively say where the story of the Amiga ends, but we can definitely point to where it began.

It was the summer of 1982 and, as with many great business ventures, the genesis of the Amiga was about to start with a phone call. On the dialling end was Larry Kaplan, ex-Atari programmer and founding member of Activision. Picking up at his end was Jay Miner, the design guru behind the Atari 400 and 2600 VCS. Both men had achieved great things in the games industry, but both felt as though their abilities had been held back by a lack of vision from their respective managers.

Miner, an ambitious hardware designer, had been eager to create something using the new Motorola 68000 processor in 1980, but Atari was much more keen on working with cheaper, less powerful chips, like the 6502. And so he left to work in the medical industry. Kaplan, likewise, had been a game creator at Atari but was dispirited from receiving neither credit nor royalties. In 1979 he had left to form Activision but was unhappy that he was still essentially a programmer of Atari 2600 games, and therefore still lining the pockets of his former employer, albeit indirectly.

Kaplan had been approached by a consortium of investors (a Texas oil baron and three dentists) looking to plant $7 million into a new videogame company. Kaplan proposed to Miner that the two work together in the production of a new games console. He had seen the NES at CES of June 82 and believed that he could create something much better. His plan was to produce exclusive games for the system, while Miner would design the hardware. Miner agreed and the new company, then named Hi-Toro, was soon established in Santa Clara, California, along with former Tonka Toys marketing man, David Morse, who came on board as General Manager. Things were off to a good start but, before the year was out, Hi-Toro was hit by one

VARIATIONS

A1000
The very first Amiga model was launched in 1985 as a desktop style machine. It was extremely expensive and, unlike the later models, the operating system was not loaded into a ROM. Instead it came on a floppy disk, which actually had to be manually installed into your machine upon purchase.



A500
An improved version of the A1000 that condensed the desktop computer into an all-in-one keyboard device. This was a much more affordable Amiga and the first to gain widespread use among normal consumers. It was also the first Amiga to truly capitalise on its gaming potential.



A2000
With the second desktop offering Amiga used very similar hardware to the A500 but it was designed, like the 1000, to look like a serious business machine. Unlike the A1000 however, it featured a number of internal expansion ports and even had the ability to upgrade the CPU.



A1500
This was a UK-only variation on the A2000. This one featured two floppy drives rather than the usual singular one and did not come with a hard disk drive as standard. A HDD could, however, be installed with an upgrade kit – which actually makes the A1500 slightly better than the A2000.



CDTV
Commodore's first real attempt to capitalise on the growing CD-ROM format was this unsuccessful home entertainment device. Basically an A500 with a CD drive, it was marketed more like an interactive video player than a computer. Unfortunately it failed to live up to its lofty promises.



A3000
The first of Commodore's new generation of machines to use the Enhanced Chipset (ECS), which was designed to improve the hardware's use of business software. The machine itself featured a faster processor, more RAM, two floppy drives and a hard drive, all stored in a desktop case.



A500 Plus
ECS made its way to the low-end machines with the introduction of the A500 Plus. As well as the new chipset, it used new versions of the operating system, which rendered some older games totally incompatible. The machine wasn't released in the US and was discontinued after just a year.



A600
One of Commodore's biggest mistakes, the A600 was a smaller, sleeker redesign of the A500 Plus, with new expansion ports and the ability to add an internal hard disk. It was designed to expand the lifespan of the ageing A500 hardware, but it just ended up alienated consumers.





"The 2600 games were completed in 1983, just in time for the videogames crash"





of the many setbacks that would eventually come to define the Amiga's history. Looking to expand the business in a credible way, Morse asked Kaplan if he would approach Atari founder Nolan Bushnell about becoming chairman of the board. Upon the meeting, Bushnell instead convinced Kaplan to leave, saying that the two would make more money if they started their own project. Sadly Bushnell soon lost interest and a jobless Kaplan was forced to go back to Atari and ask for work, while Miner was left wondering what to do about Hi-Toro.

Moving into Kaplan's position of Chief Engineer, Miner found himself at the helm of Hi-Toro and took the opportunity to push it in his own favoured direction. Where once his bosses at Atari had denied him the opportunity to use the 68000 processor, he now had the freedom to build it into his new machine, which he wanted to be a fully-fledged personal computer. Hi-Toro's investors disagreed however, and insisted that the new machine remain a games console. Miner went along with their plan but surreptitiously built expansion ports into the console so that it could be modified into a computer at a later date.

In order to keep the company ticking over while working on its ambitious new console, a part of Hi-Toro split off into a subdivision to work on Atari 2600 games that could be released quickly for a fast and reliable source of income. Under the trading name of Amiga, used because Toro belonged to a Japanese gardening technologies firm, the company produced three games for the 2600 as well as a controller called the Joyboard, which was used by standing on it and leaning from side to side.

The 2600 games were completed in 1983, just in time for the videogames crash to sweep the Atari market from under Amiga's feet. Very few of its games ever made it to the shelves, which dealt a severe blow to the company's finances but, ironically enough, it came as welcome news to Miner. With the American console market now considered dead by the industry and retailers alike, it would have been suicide to develop a new games machine – especially one as expensive as a 68000-based model would have been.

With Amiga and its investors finally singing from the same hymn sheet, Miner forged on with his computer prototype, now code-named Lorraine, and the initial test model was completed in September 1983. Built from several bread-board sized PCBs wired together, Lorraine appeared to be something of a monster. But to those who understood computing, she was a thing of beauty. Not only did the computer feature the super-fast 68000, but it also used three custom chips – dubbed Agnus, Denise and Paula – that would regulate and control different functions of the machine, cleverly taking a lot of strain away from the processor and RAM.

The way in which modern computers use graphics cards, sound cards and all number of dedicated processors is somewhat similar to what Amiga was doing for the first time in 1983, so it was clear that Miner's vision was an innovative one. And these innovations were not limited to just hardware either. As a personal computer, rather than a games console, Lorraine would need an operating system – and it found one with Intuition, a clever little user interface designed by ex-Williams arcade engineer, RJ Mical.

Later known as Workbench, Intuition was one of the first Graphical User Interfaces ever released for commercial purposes, following the 1984 release of Macintosh's Desktop in just under a year. Astonishingly simple to use, Workbench took commands that would previously have been made in text prompts and translated them in to visual signs that anyone could understand. With files and programs stored in drawers that opened and closed when you clicked on them, and a

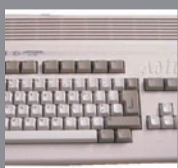
A4000

The first of Commodore's final generation of Amiga hardware use the Advanced Graphics Architecture to achieve a much higher quality of visuals. Originally released in a desktop casing, the A4000 was eventually changed to a tower model shortly before the Commodore's demise.



A1200

A low-end AGA machine, the A1200 was seen by many as the true successor to the A500 and became the second most popular Amiga among European gamers. Its advanced chipset allowed for some great games and a second wind of releases that lasted long after Commodore's end.



CD32

This second stab at the CD market was much more successful than CDTV ever was. It took the A1200 machine and turned it into a games console to rival Mega CD and 3DO. It actually did quite well, and might have continued to were it not for the arrival of the Sony PlayStation just two years later.



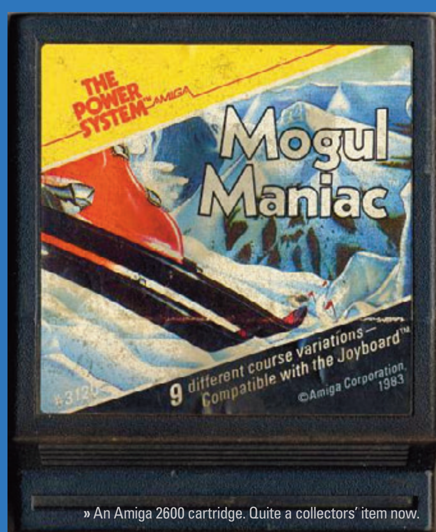


» *Defender Of The Crown* was the first game to really show the amazing power of original Amigas.



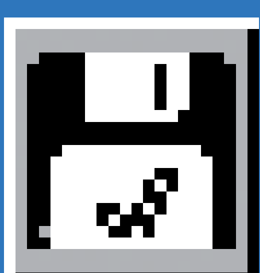
» Jay Miner's signature appeared inside the casing of the Amiga 1000, along with the print of his pet dog, Mitch.





» An Amiga 2600 cartridge. Quite a collectors' item now.





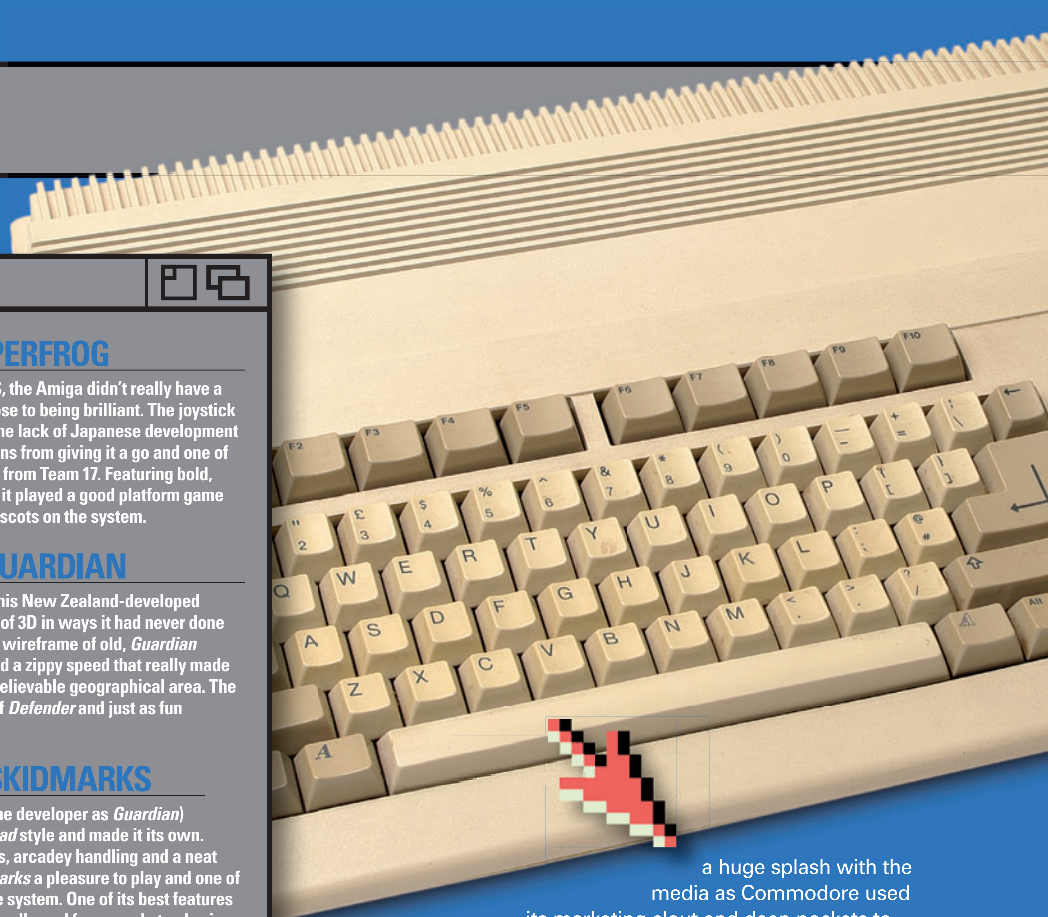
high-contrast colour display that remained visible on even the cheapest TVs, Workbench was a crucial element in Amiga's bid for mainstream appeal.

Before Amiga could reach for that success, however, it first had to convince investors so that the machine could gain enough money to go into mass production. That's where the computer's official unveiling, at the January 1984 Consumer Electronics Show, came in. For the show, Mical coded a demo animation designed to wow attendees and show just what the computer was capable of. That demo was the now famous Boing Ball – a white and red chequered ball with realistic spherical effects that bounced around on the screen, alternating the direction of its rotations while Workbench continued to function as normal in the background. The demo was so well received that it eventually became synonymous with the Amiga itself. The chequered ball was even incorporated into the official Amiga logo, post-Commodore. Mike Dailly, creator of *Lemmings*, remembers why the machine seemed so exciting at the time: "The Amiga OS was an amazing system, and the hardware incredibly well thought out", he says. "The little tricks the hardware guys added, like lowering the clock speed just a little so that video mixing was easier, and having a copper-list that could do amazing things with a screen display. That's something that is only just getting there in windows Vista if you ask me."

At CES itself, the Boing Ball demo caught the eye of executives at Atari, who saw the potential in Miner and Mical's work and offered to buy one million shares in the company for $3 each. This generous offer wasn't quite the windfall that Amiga needed, however. Atari was actually only interested in the custom chips that Minder had produced and had no intention of developing a saleable Amiga machine. Furthermore, it was willing to play dirty to get what it wanted at a bargain price. Atari loaned Amiga $500,000, knowing full well that they could not afford to pay it back, and delayed the paperwork on the buy-out until the debt became an issue and cunningly reduced its offer to 98 cents per share to compensate for the debt it had manipulated Amiga into accruing.

In the face of such a sour deal, all hope seemed lost for Miner's dream machine. That was until Atari's biggest rival, Commodore, swooped in to save the day. The thirty-year-old computing firm was currently enjoying phenomenal success thanks to the VIC-20 and C64 and was looking for a new machine that could continue the plan outlined by founder Jack Tramiel with his famous phrase: "Computers for the masses, not the classes". Ironically enough, Tramiel had quit Commodore that very month, but the vision for Amiga fell right in line with his philosophy nonetheless. Commodore paid off Atari with $1 million, which was double the amount of Amiga's debt and enough to free the company from Atari's demands. It then bought Miner's whole operation for $4.24 per share and set about making the Amiga computer a reality.

By 1985, the Amiga finally became something that ordinary people could see, try, buy and actually take home. With the custom chipset breadboards reduced down into a single desktop casing and with a keyboard, monitor and a mouse added, the Amiga 1000 was born. It was first publicly shown on 23 July 1985 at the Lincoln Centre in New York and it made



THE GAMES



Best... Platformer SUPERFROG

In comparison to Mega Drive and SNES, the Amiga didn't really have a platform game that came anywhere close to being brilliant. The joystick controllers didn't help and neither did the lack of Japanese development talent. Still, that didn't stop the Europeans from giving it a go and one of the best efforts was this quirky release from Team 17. Featuring bold, colourful visuals and fast fluid controls it played a good platform game and had one of the most memorable mascots on the system.



Best... Shoot-em-up GUARDIAN

Released very late in the Amiga's life, this New Zealand-developed shooter took the Amiga into the realms of 3D in ways it had never done before. Rather than the white-on-black wireframe of old, *Guardian* featured crisp, colourful landscapes and a zippy speed that really made you feel like you were flying around a believable geographical area. The gameplay itself was like a 3D version of *Defender* and just as fun as that sounds.



Best... Racer SUPER SKIDMARKS

Another late bloomer (and from the same developer as *Guardian*) *Super Skidmarks* took the *Super Off Road* style and made it its own. Tiny polygonal cars, tons of competitors, arcadey handling and a neat sense of humour all made *Super Skidmarks* a pleasure to play and one of the best post-Commodore games on the system. One of its best features was the multiplayer support – one mode allowed four people to play in a team while another allowed three to race each other via a split-screen.



Best... Arcade Action ALIEN BREED TOWER ASSAULT

This one's a close call thanks to the excellent *Chaos Engine*, but *Alien Breed Tower Assault* wins out due to being that little bit cooler. Team 17 made loads of versions of *Alien Breed* for Amiga and this was the best by far thanks to its multiple routes that delivered a huge variety of locations and challenges, as well as the cool ability to walk backwards while firing. This was essential co-op action. Look out for the new *Alien Breed* on Live Arcade later this year.



Best... Adventure MONKEY ISLAND 2: LECHUCK'S REVENGE

Okay, so it's arguably as much a PC game as an Amiga release, but we're going to let this one count. Almost every Amiga owner had a copy of this LucasArts classic back in the day and suffered swapping through its 12 disks every time just to spend a few hours emerged in the world of Guybrush Threepwood. Why? Because it was the funniest, best looking, best sounding and most mind boggling adventure around. And it probably still is actually.



Best... RPG LIBERATION

Designed by the legendary Tony Crowther, this sequel to the equally brilliant *Captive* is considered one of the greatest western-style RPGs on the Amiga. Set in a wonderfully imaginative future underworld of cyborgs and sleeze, it combined immersive locations with a slowly unravelling plot and deep gameplay to great effect. Most of the missions were randomly generated and you had to control and manage four independent characters, which made the game very complicated.



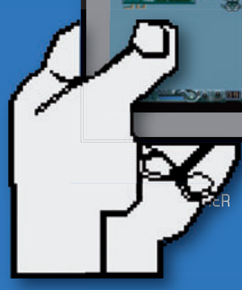
Best... Puzzler LEMMINGS

Do we really need to explain why *Lemmings* was the best Amiga puzzle game? It's been converted to almost every format on the planet and has been played by every gamer and his mum. Its masterstroke was to combine fiendish, yet enjoyable puzzles with characters and presentation so lovable that no-one could resist playing. If it wasn't for the existence of *Tetris* then *Lemmings* would be the greatest puzzler of all time, regardless of format.



Best... Sports SPEEDBALL 2

Okay, it's not a real sport, but that's what made *Speedball* so special. You didn't need any pre-acquired knowledge to get into it, so it was a level playing field. So to speak. And it didn't rely on realism to succeed, which meant that you could have wild gameplay and a clever scoring system that other sports games didn't offer at the time. It also had lots and lots of violence too, of course, which definitely helped endear it to the gamers of the time.



a huge splash with the media as Commodore used its marketing clout and deep pockets to wheel out Debbie Harry and Andy Warhol to promote the new hardware.

The Amiga 1000 was commercially launched a few short months later, in September, but it was yet to fulfil its destiny as the ordinary family's computer of choice. Suffering some production problems, Commodore was able to manufacture only 50 A1000 by November and none of these were ever released to the public and were instead used internally. A few machines managed to make their way on to store shelves by Christmas, but few people were even aware of the machine's existence and it failed to sell in significant numbers. This trend continued throughout 1986 as a series of shoddy and vague adverts failed to convince anyone of the A1000's worth, despite the fact that it was much more capable than the IBM PCs and Apple Macs of the time. At $1,295, it was cheaper too. But without any killer apps that affordability counted for little, and the A1000 sold only 35,000 units during 1986.

For gamers, however, that killer app soon hit in the form of Cinemaware's *Defender Of The Crown*. Looking far more advanced than any other home computer game could ever hope, it was the first piece of Amiga software with the power to make gamers lust after the computer until they could afford to buy one. Sadly, however, that affordable $1,295 price tag was actually an expensive one for gamers who were more accustomed to the cheaper machines like the Commodore64 and Atari 800. The Amiga 1000 was way out of the league of the average consumer

Thankfully, Commodore was already on the case and soon followed the A1000 machine up with a cut-down model that was intended for home use. Released in 1987, this new version was named the Amiga 500 – a phenomenally popular computer that remains the best selling Amiga variation to date. With the whole Amiga computer squeezed inside a keyboard casing and the ability to use your own TV set rather than an expensive bundled monitor, the A500 weighed in at a much more attractive £599. The hardware had been developed by internal staff at Commodore, rather than Miner's original team, because the then Commodore CEO believed the new team would be more 'blood thirsty'. This was a trend that would continue throughout the Amiga's life, with many machines designed and prototyped by competing factions of Commodore in order to promote innovation through an encouraged sense of competition.



» The Amiga prototype, named Lorraine, that appeared at the 1984 CES.

HIDDEN TRUTHS

Those readers old enough to remember may recall that the European release of the Amiga 1000 suffered a delay of six months. But do you know why? The reason is that a disgruntled employee of the original Hi-Toro group was so angry about Commodore's failure to market the machine in the US that he loaded a hidden message into the computer's ROM. Holding down eight separate keys while inserting a disk at the same time would cause the computer to display the message, "We made the Amiga, they fued it up" on the screen. Commodore were naturally unhappy and refused to release the machine until all the ROM chips were replaced which, ironically enough, caused an even greater lack of sales. Which is exactly what that rebellious programmer was protesting against.**

The strategy worked. Amiga 500 was a great computer and a popular one with consumers. Commodore couldn't take the whole credit, however. Much of the Amiga's emerging popularity could be attributed to unexpected support from Electronic Arts. Then led by Trip Hawkins, EA had pledged to develop the best possible games for Amiga, just as it had with C64. But it was EA's first release, actually a piece of software rather than a game, that proved to be the most important. That software was Deluxe Paint, an extremely innovative and user-friendly digital paint/animation package that was widely adopted by other games developers and became instrumental in creating amazing-looking games for the 16-bit computer. Some of the best UK developers around, big names like Sensible Software, Bullfrog and The Bitmap Brothers, all moved onto Amiga in 1987 and began churning out incredible new games that would make the A500 the must-have system of its time. Martyn Brown, who founded Amiga specialists Team17 in 1990, outlines why the computer was so attractive to developers: "The Amiga offered a tremendous level-playing field to the casual/small developer", he explains. "There were no license fees, no dev-kit, no enormous resources required. Because of this, people were able to develop what they wanted and how they wanted, leading to a lot of creativity but with far better results than in the previous generation."

The year of 1987 was indeed a defining year for the Amiga, but it was also the year in which the first act of the company's story truly came to a close. Seeking more control over the company, Commodore chose to close down Amiga's offices in Los Gatos and move all of the staff to their own HQ in West Chester, Pennsylvania. Many of Amiga's biggest names declined to move and chose to separate from the company they had helped nurture. RJ Mical was one of the first to go, choosing instead to become an independent Amiga software contractor. Jay Miner left too, though he did maintain a role as a Commodore consultant for the remainder of the company's existence. From here on out the Amiga's fate was wholly in the hands of Commodore. For better or worse.

One of Commodore's better decisions was to operate the Amiga business on two tiers. Each hardware iteration would be produced in both affordable home and expensive professional variations. This began with the dual release of the Amiga 500 and the Amiga 2000, and was a great way to maximise the sales of one single technological standard by appealing to two very different markets at once. Its other major advantage, perhaps through tradition rather than considered intention, however, was to keep the Amiga as an 'open' platform. This

> **"Amiga offered a tremendous level-playing field to the casual developer"**
>
> MARTYN BROWN, FOUNDER OF TEAM17

meant that any developer could create, produce and sell software for the machine without having to gain a licence from Commodore and without having to buy into a proprietary media. This proved extremely useful to games developers at the time, especially as competing games machines like the NES and Mega Drive required both a licence and expensive cartridges from the platform holder. Self-publishing was simply out of the question on consoles, but on Amiga it was a gloriously attainable reality.

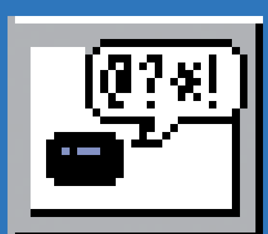
The ease with which developers could produce games for the Amiga meant that it soon amassed a gigantic catalogue of software that could thrive on the market, regardless of Commodore's actions. Which was probably for the best really, as the company soon began a decision making process that would eventually lead to its own downfall. Though the twin guns of Amiga models 500 and 2000 had proved popular there was one voice of dissent and, ironically enough, this voice came from Jay Miner, who advised A1000 owners not to upgrade. He believed that the 2000 didn't represent a significant enough improvement on the 1000 and was embarrassingly out of step with general computing standards by the time of its delayed release.

Amiga's ability to move with the times continued to diminish over the years, despite the best of intentions. The A500 had admittedly spawned and maintained a huge videogame industry and the A2000 had proved extremely popular in the animation industry, most notably on the *Babylon 5* and *Robocop* TV series. But that couldn't last forever. Commodore was aware of this and quickly moved to create new hardware, but unfortunately the new machines it chose to make were poorly thought out.

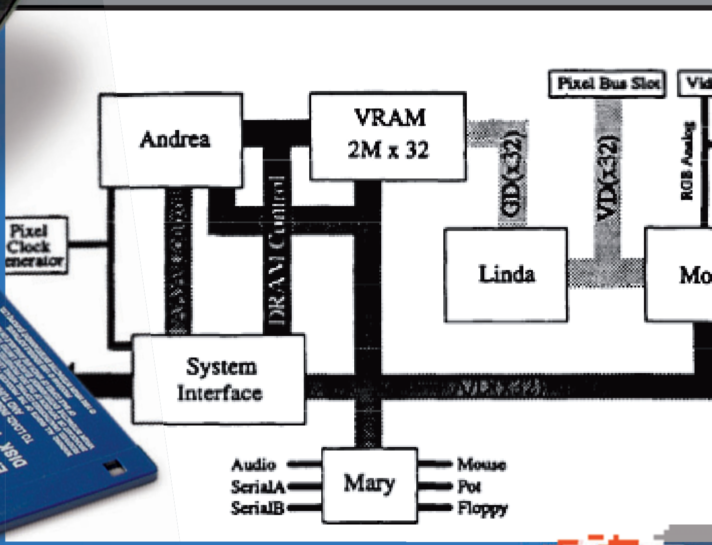
The Amiga 1500, a UK-only model, contributed nothing to the format's future, while the CDTV, and early multimedia box (worthy of its own in-depth feature) was too far ahead of its time and so poorly marketed that it went unnoticed by the general public. A more worthwhile stab at self-improvement came with the Enhanced Chipset found in the A500+ and A3000 but, again, this was far from the major leap in power that was needed when Microsoft's Windows 3.1 was just a



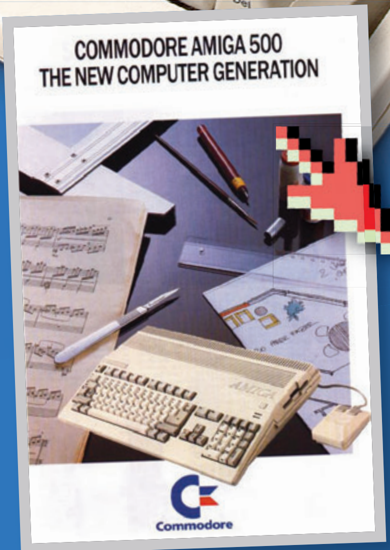
»Escom's proposed new Amiga, called Walker, appeared on the front cover of *CU Amiga* and led many to believe that the format would make a strong come back after the fall of Commodore. It never quite worked out, however.



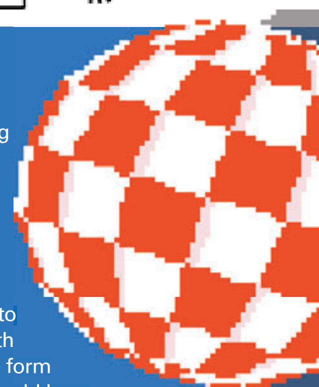




» David Haynie's schematic for the cancelled AAA chipset. Note how the custom chips still used female names.

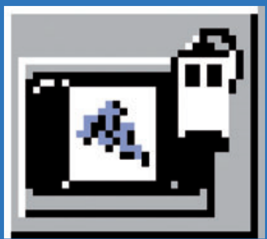


» An early Commodore Amiga advert that typically failed to capitalise on the computer's strong points.



year or so away from taking a serious grip of both the home and business markets. All of these new Amigas, which did nothing or little new, only served to confuse and irritate the consumer base – a situation that was made worse with the arrival of the A600, a miniaturized A500+ that looked cool but, again, was really nothing new. Arriving just months before the real new generation of Amigas, the A600 was a colossal waste of time and must have taken a massive chunk of Commodore's money and flushed it down the drain.

In 1992, the much-needed new Amigas finally arrived. Commodore had initially been working on the AAA (Amiga Advanced Architecture) chipset, which was designed by Chief Engineer David Haynie, but the project was moving slowly, so a lower-grade machine was put out as a stopgap. Choosing to release two variants once again, Commodore released the A4000 for business use and the A1200 for home use. Both used AGA (Advanced Graphics Architecture) and represented a significant leap over ECS.



Compared to previous Amigas, AGA allowed for some fantastic looking games, including some incredible 3D accomplishments but, once again, they were considered obsolete the moment they hit the shelves. Many considered the 68020 processor too slow, while it soon became apparent that a lack of a CD-ROM drive or a dedicated push to get Amiga online would hurt the format in the near future.

"We were really excited about AGA Amigas", says Martyn Brown, "but it was unfortunate that it perhaps came a little too late to save the machine as other systems appeared." Team17 produced three games exclusively for AGA, including the technically incredible *Alien Breed 3D II*. "That game was essentially *Quake* on an Amiga back in 1995/96", Brown recalls. "I think it underlined the problem that if a super-powered Amiga had appeared around 1993/1994, then it may well have not only survived, but gone from strength to strength as the PC market boomed."

Behind the scenes, Commodore had produced three AAA prototypes, but in 1993 the company made the smart decision of scrapping the aging project and starting afresh on a system so advanced that it would set the standard upon release. The system was codenamed Hombre (another Spanish word for friend, except male) and was intended to be a 64-bit RISC-based computer, built with both 3D and multimedia specifically in mind. Due to be designed by Haynie, in conjunction with Hewlett-Packard, and intended to take the form of both games console and computer, it could have revolutionised Amiga. But, alas, it was never completed.

In April 1994, just a few months after the ambitious release of the first Amiga games console, the CD32, Commodore was declared bankrupt and ceased all operations. In many ways this didn't represent the end of Amiga. Developers continued to produce games for many years to come, retailers like Electronics Boutique continued to stock software until around 1998, and Amiga-dedicated magazines survived on the newsstands, remarkably, until the new millennium. But without any new Amiga hardware on the horizon, this unique afterlife was destined to dwindle.

For a time it did look as though Amiga might survive after the death of Commodore, just as it had existed independently before 1983. The majority of Commodore's assets were soon acquired by Escom, who continued to produce A1200s until 1996 and manufactured a tower version of the A4000 in 1995. Escom spoke of licensing the Amiga technology to different manufacturers, effectively opening the machine up to IBM PC-like proliferation, and a new CD-based desktop machine, dubbed Walker, even featured on a 1996 CU Amiga cover. A sub-division of Escom, named Amiga Technologies, was set up but little of note happened for months.

In 1997, Amiga was auctioned off to the highest bidder, PC manufacturer Gateway 2000, and was renamed Amiga International. Under Gateway, the company produced a new operating system, Amiga OS 3.5, for the classic machines and plans were continued to license Amiga hardware, now Power PC based, to several companies. Again, however, very little actually happened and Amiga found itself in the hands of another owner, Amino Development, in 2000.

Amino Development was renamed Amiga Inc and from there things get extremely complicated. In the years since 2000 the Amiga name has been used to brand some minor mobile and web-based software called Amiga Anywhere, while a small effort has been made to create new hardware. Amiga Inc contracted a company called Eyetech (made up of former Commodore UK employees) to produce new hardware, while a

LAPTOP LEGACY

One of the reasons for Amiga's downfall was that it never truly moved with the times. Why, for example, did the company never cash in on the extremely important laptop market? The blame lies with Marshall Smith, a one-time Commodore CEO who was responsible for some of the company's biggest mistakes. At the 1985 CES, Commodore was showing off a prototype of its first ever portable computer – a compact LCD-screened wonder that impressed attendees so much that 15,000 orders were placed that very day. The computer was never produced however, because the CEO of Tandy, itself a producer of portables, took Marshall Smith to one side and conned him into believing that portable computers would never sell. Smith immediately cancelled the project and shut down the entire portable research and development group. The company never tried to produce a laptop ever again and the Amiga missed out on a model that would have made it much more relevant to users, particularly in the 1990s.





» David Haynie, designer of the AAA chipset and the doomed Hombre computer.





» From 1984-2006 the Amiga operating system has evolved considerably.

separate company, Hyperion, was charged with programming Amiga OS4. The hardware, a PowerPC computer called AmigaOne, was completed and sold in very small numbers in 2002, while users had to wait until December 2006 for the final version of OS4.

The existence of new hardware may seem like a big deal after all those years, but since the AmigaOne is both incompatible with classic Amigas and was produced in extremely limited quantities, it can be considered little more than a curio for hobbyists. It is an Amiga in name only. OS4, by contrast, has more in common with the original vision. Its features can be considered a true evolution of the original Workbench ideas and the fact that the OS works on both PPC-enhanced classic machines, as well as new hardware, certainly makes it feel like a member of the family. Or at least a distant relative.

Rumours abound that Hyperion are working on a PPC Apple Mac version of Amiga OS4, but Amiga Inc itself claims that it is currently working on an Amiga OS 5 that will run on multiple computer systems. New hardware is even said to be on the way – this time from ACK Software Controls, which announced two new models in 2007. Its plans to produce a Basic Amiga at $500 and a Power Amiga at $1500 are scarily similar to the business model adopted by Commodore during the height of the Amiga's popularity. But we'd be foolish to let such a similarity convince us that anything worthwhile will come of these new developments.

Though the Amiga name lives on, and is still invested in the production of original hardware and software, it is a far cry from the company that began life with the work of Jay Miner and RJ Mical. And that's how we'd prefer to remember Amiga. Not as a confused mess of IP ownership and rights, not as the tragic failure of Commodore, but as a computer that was totally unlike any other and one that spawned one of the greatest videogaming eras.

IMPORTANT DEVELOPERS

TEAM 17

A true rags-to-riches story, Team17 is emblematic of the Amiga's importance to the games industry as a whole. Formed by an alliance of shareware coders and managed by Martyn Brown, who previously ran shareware distributor 17 Bit Software, Team17 took its bedroom programming prowess and harnessed it to become a truly world-class developer and publisher of Amiga software. Early hits like *Full Contact* and *Alien Breed* secured it a place in the hearts of Amiga fans – but it was Team17's decision to help develop Andy Davidson's *Worms* project, when nobody else would, that made it really rich. The team is still around today, it's still independent, and is even working on a new *Alien Breed* for release later this year.

THE BITMAP BROTHERS

One of the coolest developers on the Amiga, The Bitmap Brothers cleverly built an identifiable style into their games so that you could tell something was made by them just by looking at it. Chunky visuals with metallic effects and earthy textures gave Bitmap games, like *Speedball 2*, *Gods* and the *Chaos Engine*, a unique look that stood them apart from anything else on the Amiga. Sadly, The Bitmaps was one publishing house that never really found a way to survive after the death of Amiga. They clung on to the bitter end, releasing the exclusive *Chaos Engine 2* in 1996, before slowly fading away in the PlayStation and PC days.

PSYGNOSIS

As both a developer and publisher, the Liverpool based Psygnosis was responsible for a vast number of classic Amiga days and helped nurture talent across the British games industry. Under its umbrella were DMA Design (*Lemmings*, *Walker*) Bizarre Creations (*Killing Game Show*, *Wiz n Liz*) Traveller's Tales (*Leander*) and Reflections (*Shadow Of The Beast*). All of these developers survive within the games industry to this day, some under different guises (DMA became Rockstar North), while Psygnosis itself was acquired by Sony in 1999 after the phenomenal success of its *WipEout* series.

CINEMAWARE

If there's one developer that can be held responsible for Amiga's success as a games machine then it is, without a doubt, Cinemaware. In 1986 the company released *Defender Of The Crown* for Amiga and blew everyone away with amazing 16-bit visuals – the likes of which nobody had even imagined until then. *Defender Of The Crown* can arguably take the credit for the phenomenal sales of the Amiga 500 in the late-eighties, but it was Cinemaware's later games that truly defined the developer. Classics like *It Came From The Desert* and *Wings* continued to do amazing things with the Amiga hardware and upheld Cinemaware's reputation for immersive cinematic experiences.

LUCASFILM GAMES

Okay, so most of Lucasfilm's classic games were developed for other systems and then ported to the Amiga, but its innovative graphic adventures were still among the best titles on the system. And we refuse to believe there was a single Amiga owner that didn't play *The Secret Of Monkey Island* at some point. Other classic releases like *Zak McKracken*, *Indiana Jones*, *Loom* and *Maniac Mansion* made Lucasfilm one of the most cherished Amiga developers around, and paved the way for other amazing Amiga adventures like *Beneath A Steel Sky* and *Simon The Sorcerer*.

SENSIBLE SOFTWARE

Though Sensible Software attracted huge attention in its early days thanks to C64 hits *Wizball* and *Shoot-em-up Construction Kit*, the developer remains best known for two incredible Amiga games to this day. We refer, of course, to *Cannon Fodder* and *Microprose Soccer*. The former is probably the only game ever made to actually make the RTS fun to play and, similarly, the latter is one of the few football games that sport haters could ever be convinced to play. Sadly, Sensible never quite got beyond these two hits. It spent 1992-2000 creating remakes until the studio closed.

THE MAKING OF...

SPACE INVADERS



In a rare interview with Japan's godfather of videogames, Jonti Davies speaks with Tomohiro Nishikado about the birth of the game that triggered a revolution 30 years ago.



» Ex-Taito visionary, Tomohiro Nishikado.

For a man who single-handedly turned his country into a nation of videogame junkies, and without whom Shigeru Miyamoto claims he would not even have joined the game industry, Tomohiro Nishikado is a surprisingly unassuming and down-to-earth kind of chap. Since 1996 he's been running his own operation, a 22-strong development studio called Dreams, just down the road from Sega in Tokyo. It's a quiet and unnoticed developer that seems to be deliberately avoiding the limelight – the discography on Dreams' website is nothing more than a list of generic terms: 'Action game for PS2', 'Communication game for DS', and so on. So it's quite odd to think that 30 years ago, when in his tenth year at Taito, Nishikado alone produced a global phenomenon in the mesmerising and boldly innovative *Space Invaders*.

Let's head back to 1978. "At the time," says Nishikado, "the block destruction [*Block Kuzushi*] game *Breakout* was really popular in Japan, and I was hooked on it myself. I'd made a few games up until that point, but when I experienced *Breakout* it made me want to drive myself to develop a game that would surpass it." But where many developers would have been more than content to code a superior clone of *Breakout* with a few clever enhancements (which is precisely what another Taito designer, Akira Fujita, would do a decade later), Nishikado took a completely different stance as he sought to surpass the addictive 'bat, ball and block-breaking' system of Atari's 1976 classic. Thanks to his keen perceptive powers, Nishikado was able to see beneath the surface of *Breakout* and identify the mechanism that was causing him and so many other young Japanese to put their 100-yen coins in the slots of Atari's cabinets.

"For me," Nishikado elaborates, "the really interesting element of *Breakout* was the art of deciding on a number of targets and that sense of achievement you'd get from destroying a whole group of blocks simultaneously to clear the stage. I analysed the exhilaration players felt when playing *Breakout* like this, and I eventually decided to capitalise on this [gameplay design] by trying my hand at a shooting game where *Breakout*'s quadrilateral targets would be replaced with targets that had more interesting forms."

Had Taito's top man not told Nishikado to make changes to the design of his project, *Space Invaders* would have ended up with people taking the roles of those "interesting forms" Nishikado was looking for. "During the development process, I had the enemy targets set as humans," he reveals, "but Taito's then-president told me to stop using humans in such a way. I initially thought, 'Okay, if I substitute the humans with monster-like creatures, that should work out fine'. But then I saw a newspaper article saying that *Star Wars* had been extremely well received in America, so I decided on using space aliens instead of monsters. *Star Wars* had just hit the theatres in America and was about to be premiered in Japan, so there was a bit of a 'space boom' happening. And that's why I opted to make my game's targets aliens from outer space."



With that settled, Nishikado continued with his work as an independent entity within Taito, which is how he liked to operate in those days (even today, he seems to value autonomy: his Dreams outfit works with/for 20 or so Japanese soft cos, maintaining complete independence). Apart from

IN THE KNOW



- » **PUBLISHERS:** TAITO
- » **DEVELOPER:** TOMOHIRO NISHIKADO
- » **RELEASED:** 1978
- » **GENRE:** SHOOT-'EM-UP
- » **EXPECT TO PAY:** £500 FOR AN ORIGINAL CABINET, MUCH LESS FOR ANY OF THE CONSOLE/ COMPUTER PORTS

THE MAKING OF...
SPACE INVADERS



"Star Wars had just hit the theatres in America and was about to be premiered in Japan, so there was a bit of a 'space boom' happening … That's why I decided to make my game's targets aliens from outer space" NISHIKADO REVEALS THAT GEORGE LUCAS'S WORK HAD AN EFFECT ON SPACE INVADERS, AS DID H.G. WELLS AND MARINE LIFE…

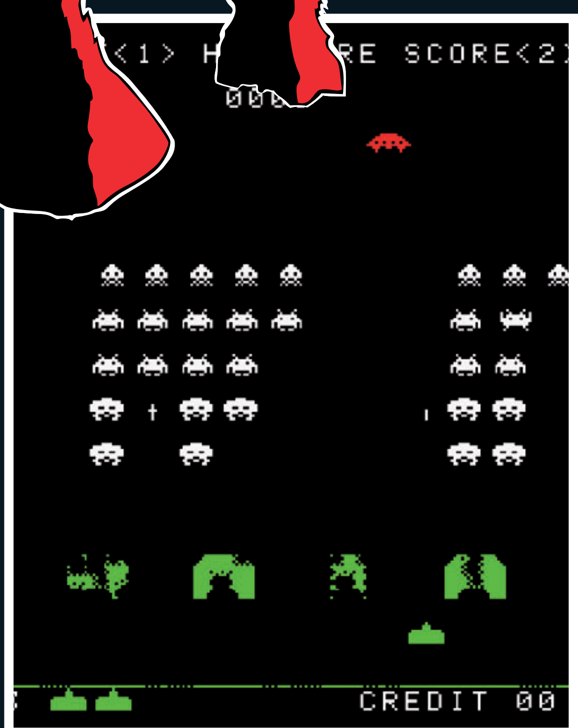


the cabinet design and some sound work, *Space Invaders* was exclusively Nishikado's baby: "I let a new employee work on the sound source and produce *Space Invaders*' audio effects, but apart from that, all of the other work – namely the planning, the design, graphics design, coding the software, building the hardware – I did entirely by myself." He managed to turn the game around in remarkably quick time, especially given how his first job was the daunting task of producing his own development tools specifically for this project: "From the initial conception of the idea right through to the completion of the game," Nishikado confirms, "*Space Invaders* took me approximately 12 months to produce." That was the year that was.

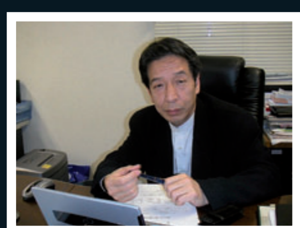
Having joined Taito with a degree in Engineering from the electrical engineering-focused Tokyo Denki University, Nishikado was apparently seen within the company as something of a go-to man for any hardware-related tasks. His first three games for Taito – 1970's *Skyfighter* and its sequel the following year, and 1972's *Borderline* – were all mechanically operated creations; games without screens. Nishikado's great skill was to improvise with existing materials and create something that was entertaining and challenging. With *Space Invaders*, however, he realised that his new project was too ambitious for the technology and software he had to hand – new tools would be required, and who better to produce them than the engineer-programmer himself?

"There really was no microcomputer hardware in Japan during the late 1970s," Nishikado laments, "so I used American hardware [including the Intel 8080 CPU] as a reference point and then took it upon myself to remodel it. Also, there was no game development environment to speak of, so I began to create my own development tools from scratch. I drew up a rough specification document and started programming while consulting that paper, but I was thinking about the efficiency of the tools I was making more than anything else, which complicated things. Because of that, I would create and program an original development tool and then realise that I'd soon need another tool as well, so I'd build that from scratch next… in the end, this process took up about half of *Space Invaders*' entire development period."

Those six months of preparatory work were, of course, quite worthwhile. The limitations of 1978 vintage hardware and memory capacities caused Nishikado no end of headaches, though. As he worked towards realising his *Star Wars*-inspired dreams of a game to tap into the space boom, he was also faced with the realisation that capacity and power were at a strict premium. Still, Nishikado accepted that he had to work with what was available, reconfiguring and reworking until he had the tools and hardware required to get the *Space Invaders* he could see in his mind's eye onto a monitor. Ever the innovator, he quickly moved on from the most primitive of methodologies to something altogether more forward thinking: "At first," Nishikado says, "I drew a plan for the screen layout on paper and then put that up on the screen, but if I wasn't happy with it because it didn't look good, I would have to start drawing a new frame action and put that up as a replacement, and so on. That was the process I was using – I really wasn't able to



» *Space Invaders* spawned many copycat games, but far from irritating Nishikado, he takes an 'imitation is the greatest form of flattery' approach





» The 'Nagoya shot' technique in action: finding invulnerability as the Invaders encroach was just one of the tricks discovered by Japan's fanatical players of the game in 1978.



draw any good results that way, though. So in view of that, I created something that these days we take for granted: paint tools, whereby I could use a light pen to easily make corrections to the graphics. This enabled me to complete the graphics with ease and in relative comfort. I think that, at the time, this was a groundbreaking development tool."

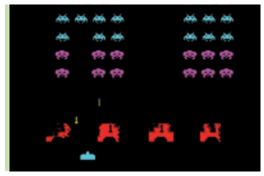
Thanks to his inventive time-saving measures, Nishikado was able to work with greater efficiency once the groundwork had been done and his development environment had been established. And as his processes became smoother and less jarring, it became much easier for him to express influences other than *Star Wars*. In particular, the enemy forms in *Space Invaders* began to take on new subtleties and idiosyncrasies. Nishikado explains: "I took the octopus-like aliens from H.G. Wells's *War of the Worlds* as a starting point, to influence the design of the biggest enemy targets in the game. For the targets in the middle of the screen, I modelled them on the image of a crab, and for the uppermost enemies I was thinking of squids. I was imagining the enemies as marine life. The aliens' movement was basic because of the low memory capacity I had to work with, which meant I could only program two patterns [of movement]. But I felt that in some ways, simple was best."

It's probably just as well that Nishikado was content (to a point) with simple design, because the specs of the *Space Invaders* hardware would allow nothing greater. Getting the hardware properly and advantageously configured was in itself a great and time-consuming challenge: "For the base CPU board, I remodelled an existing game board," Nishikado recalls. "I replaced the ROM section with RAM and then developed Monitor ROM. This enabled 16 blocks of data to be input using the keyboard, which meant it was possible to use the keyboard to execute programs. I made various functions and features in the Monitor ROM, including an option that would let me save any programs I made to cassette tape. Of course, I also included a function so that I could produce graphics while looking at the monitor. I used the one kilobyte of static RAM available at the time to compose 64 units of eight kilobytes each lined up for

» The population of Japan took the title screen's encouragement to 'Insert Coins' to excess, children and adults alike.



Space Invaders Twelve



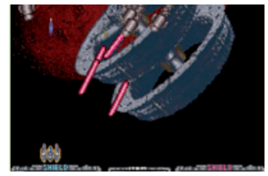
SPACE INVADERS PART II (Arcade, 1979)

Tomohiro Nishikado's first direct sequel to *Space Invaders* was, he admits, not as big a hit as the original. Still, it had some interesting features, including increased complexity to the movement of its enemy targets.



RETURN OF THE INVADERS (Arcade, 1985)

Although Nishikado was no longer at the helm, Taito went ahead with a jazzed-up *Invaders* sequel in 1985. *Return of the Invaders* again increased the variety of Invaders' movement patterns, as well as brightening things up.



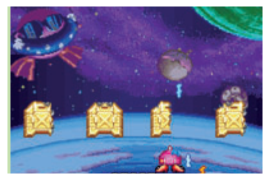
MAJESTIC TWELVE: THE SPACE INVADERS PART IV (Arcade, 1990)

Known as *Super Space Invaders '91* outside of Japan, this introduced scrolling backgrounds, shields and power-ups. It also featured a series of stages in which you needed to protect cattle from UFOs…



SPACE INVADERS DX (Arcade, 1993)

Featuring a traditional Space Invader Mode, a two-player split-screen Battle Mode and a Parody Mode, *Space Invaders DX* was an experimental game whose best features would be better developed in *Space Invaders '95/Akkanbeder.*



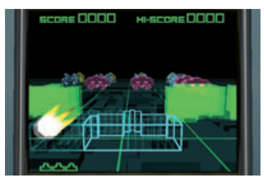
AKKANBEDER / SPACE INVADERS '95 (Arcade, 1995)

This great *Space Invaders* parody took a pun to arrive at its title: 'akkanbe' is what kids say as they pull one eyelid down and stick their tongue out to make a funny face at another kid, a teacher or a parent.



SPACE RAIDERS / SPACE INVADERS: INVASION DAY (PS2, 2002)

This Sammy-developed *Space Invaders* spin-off brought the series into *Earth Defense Force* territory, arming a few heroes with big guns and telling them to kill Invaders who have already landed on Earth.



SPACE INVADERS ANNIVERSARY (PS2, 2003)

Notable for including an original 3D Mode, *Space Invaders Anniversary* was an unremarkable collection of variations of *Space Invaders* and *Part II*. The PSP attempt would prove much more worthwhile…



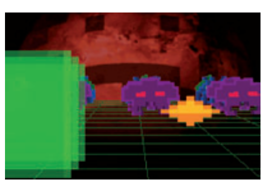
SPACE INVADERS POCKET (PSP, 2005)

This neat compilation contains four variations of the original *Space Invaders* (namely black and white, colour, cellophane colour effect and upright cab styles) as well as *Part II*, *Return*, *Majestic Twelve* and *Akkanbeder.*



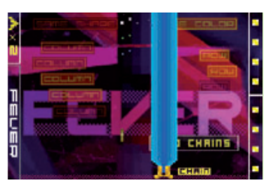
SPACE INVADERS REVOLUTION (DS, 2005)

Nishikado himself developed *Revolution*, using the opportunity to incorporate touch-screen controls (digital controls remain far superior), 13 Invader types and a variety of new power-ups and settings.



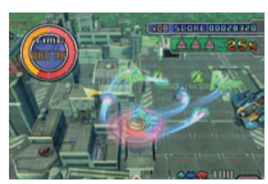
3D SPACE INVADERS (Mobile, 2006)

Providing the option to turn *Space Invaders* into a first-person shooter of sorts, the Taito-developed *3D Space Invaders* is surprisingly ambitious given that it is a game you can play on your mobile phone. Defending on the go!



SPACE INVADERS EXTREME (DS/PSP/XBLA, 2007)

Arguably the best *Space Invaders* sequel, *Extreme* is probably what Nishikado has in mind when he says: "I think that shooting games have become too difficult and too centred on catering to enthusiasts."

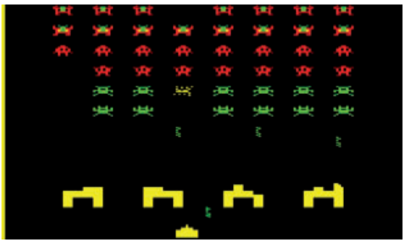


SPACE INVADERS GET EVEN (Wii, 2008)

This recently released WiiWare exclusive turns the *Space Invaders* principle upside-down by putting the player in control of the Invaders, with the objective being to complete a successful invasion of Earth.

Attack of the Clones

How many times will we get away with using variations on the same pun?



INVADERS (BBC MICRO, 1982)

IJK Software's *Invaders* was one of the earliest computer format clones of Taito's international hit. Monochrome and colour versions were released (the latter only for Model B computers).



AVENGER (C64, 1982)

Another early attempt at bringing *Space Invaders* home was Commodore's *Avenger*, which managed to reproduce the coin-op's formula with only a minimum of cuts and compromises.



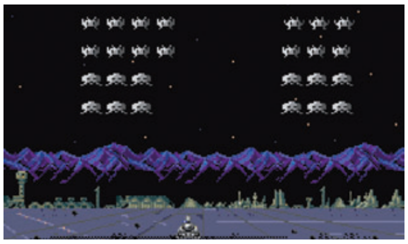
3D INVADERS (CPC, 1984)

More 'quasi-isometric' than three-dimensional, this effort at replicating/improving the original *Space Invaders* formula really struggles to imitate the playability of Nishikado's game.



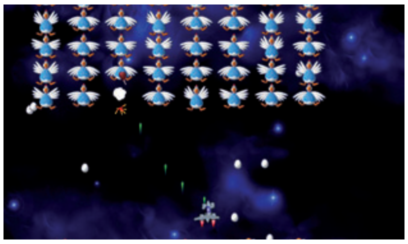
PEPSI INVADERS (ATARI 2600, 1983)

This limited-run promotional 'advergame', commissioned as you might guess by Coca-Cola, replaces *Space Invaders*' alien enemies with the letters P, E, P, S and I. Very clever, that.



SPACE INVADERS: FUKKATSU NO HI (PC ENGINE, 1990)

This great PC Engine conversion also includes a 'New Version' of the game, where the protective bases are removed as your ship gains the assistance of a shield.



CHICKEN INVADERS (PC, 1999)

Chicken Invaders is a 1999 vintage poultry-based clone of *Space Invaders*, complete with eggs and drumsticks in lieu of laser fire. As it's freeware, you might like to give this game a shot. Don't be a chicken, etc.



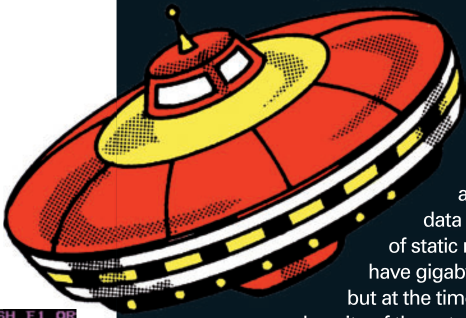
SPACE INVADERS (WONDERSWAN, 1999)

This port of *Space Invaders* for Bandai's WonderSwan handheld replicates Nishikado's original work, only inverted as black sprites on a clear background.



SWEET INVADERS (MOBILE, 2006)

In one of the least imaginative and most shameful conversions of *Space Invaders*, 2006's *Sweet Invaders* 'innovates' by displaying bitty 'stunners' in the background of its 'erotic' take on the game.



the program area, but the performance was very bad and I remember occasions when data would become corrupt because of static noise. Nowadays, developers have gigabytes of memory to work with, but at the time I only had kilobytes…"

In spite of those trying limitations, Nishikado must have realised that he had a hit on his hands when groups of Taito employees began gathering at his desk for a go on the prototype version. "Once the game was close to being finished, quite a few people from [Taito's] development division were so pleased with it they began to play it regularly," he smiles. "However, because they were playing *Space Invaders* using my development tools, I wasn't able to get any work done while they were playing, which bothered me a lot. Having said that, although I developed *Space Invaders* alone, I think that in the end it was improved and perfected thanks to consultation with the people who were playing the game around me."

While the floor-level workers at Taito were rightly impressed with *Space Invaders* and were the first people in the world to become hooked on it, the 'Suits' were, according to Nishikado, a picture of doubt and scepticism: "In those days I was given complete freedom to work on games as I saw fit, so at the start of the project no one expressed any opposition to the idea. Along the way, though, I had to explain – mostly to businesspeople and salespersons – the game's shooting system and how there was nothing else to compare it with at that point. I had to outline how being invaded by these aliens would result in a game over, how enemies would shoot at the player and so on. That was difficult; they generally didn't give *Space Invaders* a good evaluation – they didn't seem to rate it very highly."

Part of the execs and salespersons' problem with the game was that it did something unusual; something they either couldn't comprehend or simply didn't see as an appealing factor in a project they were backing: "Up until *Space Invaders*, shooting games didn't feature enemies that would attack the player," Nishikado explains. But that wasn't the only feature that met with doubting voices: "Also, even if you still had missiles remaining, if the Invaders got to the bottom of the screen and successfully carried out their invasion, it would result in a game over. To tell you the truth, both of these features were vehemently opposed by the sales and businesspeople…"

The final build of *Space Invaders* satisfied its creator to an extent, but Nishikado had some regrets even as soon as the game was in the wilds of Japan's 'game centres' (the places we'd call arcades). "The capabilities of the *Space Invaders* arcade hardware were really low," Nishikado sighs. "I wanted to produce colourful images, but it just wasn't possible with that hardware – so as soon as the game was complete, I began to develop a plan for new high-level hardware." Initially, that wasn't possible, so the game appeared in monochrome form. Eventually, Taito came up with an ingenious solution that went some way towards placating Nishikado's desire for a colourful game: multicoloured cellophane screen overlays were placed over the displays of existing cabinets. Over in the States, Bally/Midway would pull the same trick with its upright cabinet.

While *Space Invaders* was by no means a rushed job – in spite of completing work on the game in just 12 months, Nishikado was not working to a set deadline as such – the limitations of the technology at his disposal meant the final build was not quite where he wanted it to be: "For one thing," says Nishikado, "I really wanted to include a feature in the original *Space Invaders* where the Invaders would split up and form groups… but at least this ended up appearing in *Space Invaders Part II*."

If Nishikado was slightly unimpressed by his own production, the same could not be said of Japan's population at large.



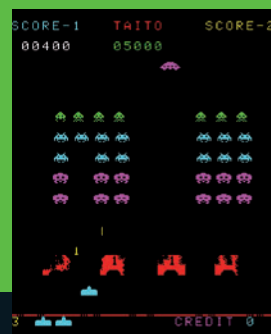
» *Space Invaders*' clear outline of its high-score system ensured that players would try to play cleverly and keep on returning.

> **"Businesspeople and salespersons … generally didn't give Space Invaders a good evaluation – they didn't seem to rate it very highly"** THE SUITS COULDN'T SEE A GLOBAL HIT EVEN IF TOMOHIRO NISHIKADO DEMONSTRATED AND EXPLAINED IT TO THEM



» Tomohiro Nishikado's work remains relevant 30 years on from its conception, marking the game out to be, what we already knew, one of the greatest ever to grace our planet.

DEVELOPER HIGHLIGHTS



» SPEED RACE DX
SYSTEM: ARCADE
YEAR: 1975

» SPACE INVADERS PART II
(PICTURED)
SYSTEM: ARCADE
YEAR: 1979

» LUNAR RESCUE
SYSTEM: ARCADE

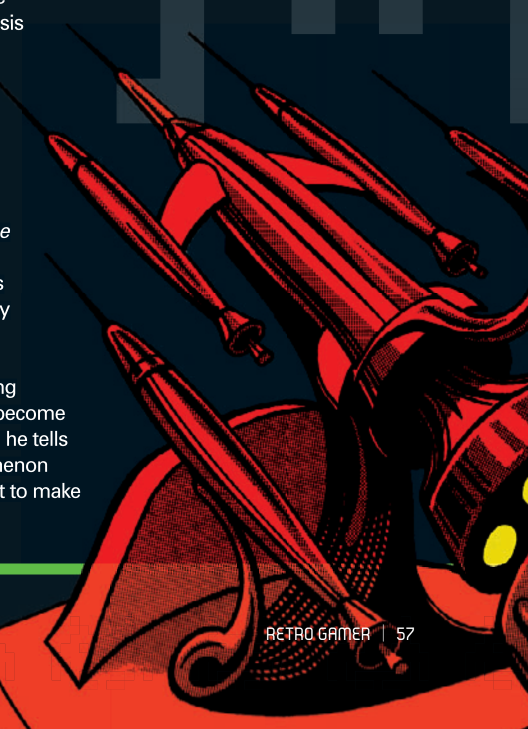
Tapping into the tremendous local interest in science fiction, *Space Invaders* was very much of its time – a 1978 vintage game for the inhabitants of Japan in 1978. The coin-op was an instant hit, zapping games right into the core of Japanese culture and even reportedly causing a shortage of 100-yen coins as a by-product of its phenomenal success. When we mention this myth/legend to Nishikado, he seems like he wants to laugh it off as a fanciful exaggeration, but it definitely holds an element of truth, as he concedes: "The effect of *Space Invaders* was certainly noted among businesses using 100-yen coins a lot, but I don't know whether the coins actually became less common because of the game…"

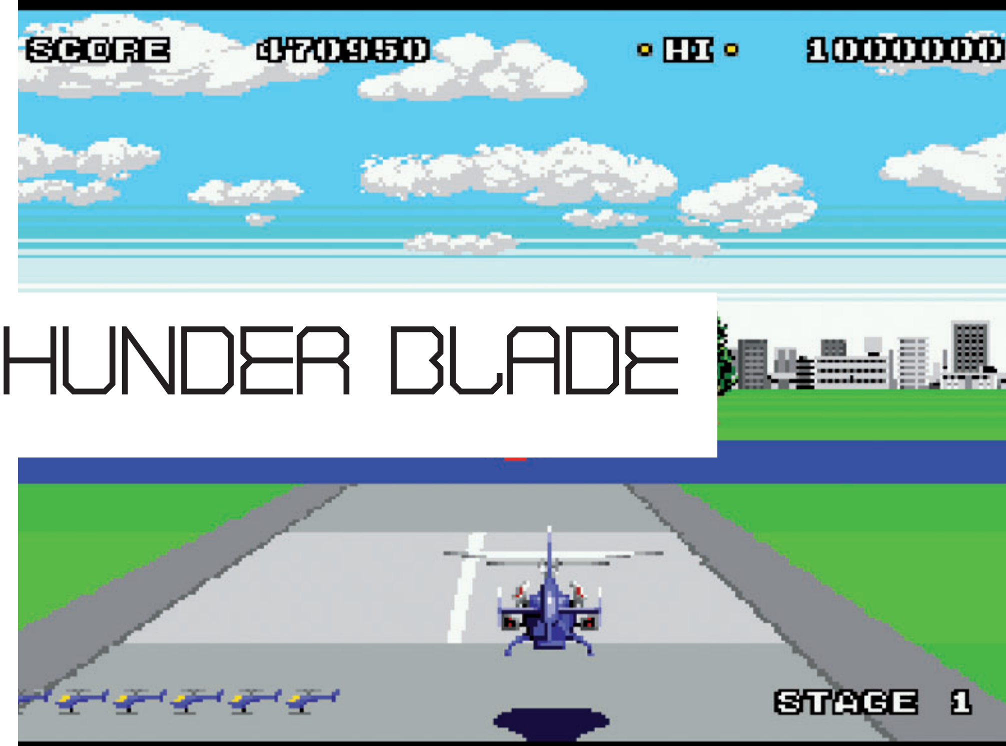
Nishikado can't take credit for the housing of his PCB, mind, as he had nothing to do with the coin-op cabinet's design: "The cabinet was designed and produced by a separate team," he says. Like the Western versions of *Space Invaders* manufactured by Bally/Midway, Taito's Japanese *Space Invaders* cabinets were eventually presented in different flavours – some upright machines, some in a cocktail-table style. After some comparison work, Taito's preference was for the table format, as Nishikado relates: "Originally, the cabinet was intended as an upright design. The table-type cabinet saved a lot of space, though, so that version ended up supplanting the upright model." *T.T. Space Invaders*, as it was dubbed by Taito in Japan, was a sensationally popular machine. Later on, however, Taito would release an upgraded version of the upright, which would ultimately prove to have a longer life in Japan's quickly changing game centres. The later addition of proper colour graphics (a notable improvement on the 'black-and-white graphics with colour overlay' solution) cemented *Space Invaders*' place as a 'safe bet' in bars, game centres and other locations.

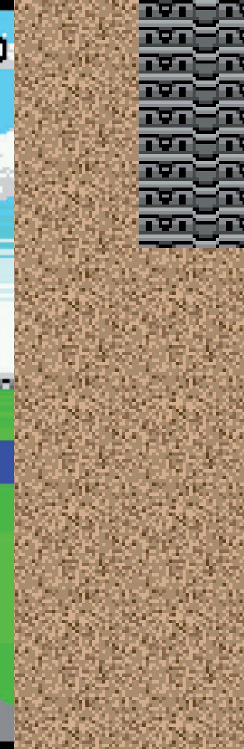
The legacy left by *Space Invaders* is so immense and multi-branched that it's almost impossible to quantify the game's influence on the world. It has appeared in countless TV shows, either by way of a passing reference or as a central theme; it has provided the impetus for numerous musical projects (search Google Images for the sleeve to 1981 dub LP *Scientist Meets the Space Invaders*); it has even inspired artistic movements. Yet in Japan, the game itself was – like most trends here, it has to be said – a relatively short-lived phenomenon. On the one hand, Nishikado reckons: "Sales of *Space Invaders* were really much higher than I had anticipated." But on the other, matter of factly, he tells us: "The following year, once sales of the game had started to decline, I was asked to produce *Part II*, which I developed dutifully, but it wasn't such a big hit [as the original]."

1978 was a hugely significant year for Taito and games in Japan in general, but in terms of the volume of notable games, it would be superseded year on year thereafter. As early as 1979, Nishikado was seeing his compatriots gaining ground, even if much of the basis for their successes had been laid by *Space Invaders* and what Japan collectively termed the 'invader game' boom: "When I saw how smooth the movement was in Namco's *Galaxian* – and how colourful it was, too – I remember thinking *Space Invaders* had lost [the battle]. There were many shooting games that used *Space Invaders* as a basis after that," Nishikado concludes, although he doesn't sound at all bitter about that situation. Without *Space Invaders*, there's a chance that Japanese shoot-'em-ups would not have developed, or at least not in the amazing way they did during the 1980s and 1990s. It's not merely Taito that owes Nishikado a (metaphorical) debt, but also the other Japanese developers (Namco with *Galaxian* included) who took inspiration from *Space Invaders* and, on a global scale, the millions of people whose first experience of the power of videogames was the heroic act of saving the Earth from invasion by pesky aliens who were wont to scuttle their way towards the planet's surface.

Nishikado isn't keen on the latest examples of shooting games – "In recent years, I think that such games have become too difficult and too centred on catering to enthusiasts," he tells us – but he remains committed to the enduring phenomenon that began in his office at Taito in early 1978: "I still want to make simple shooting games," he smiles.







SUPER THUNDER BLADE

A LITTLE BIT CHOPPY



- **PUBLISHER:** SEGA
- **RELEASED:** 1988
- **GENRE:** SHOOT-'EM-UP
- **FEATURED HARDWARE:** MEGA DRIVE
- **EXPECT TO PAY:** A FEW QUID



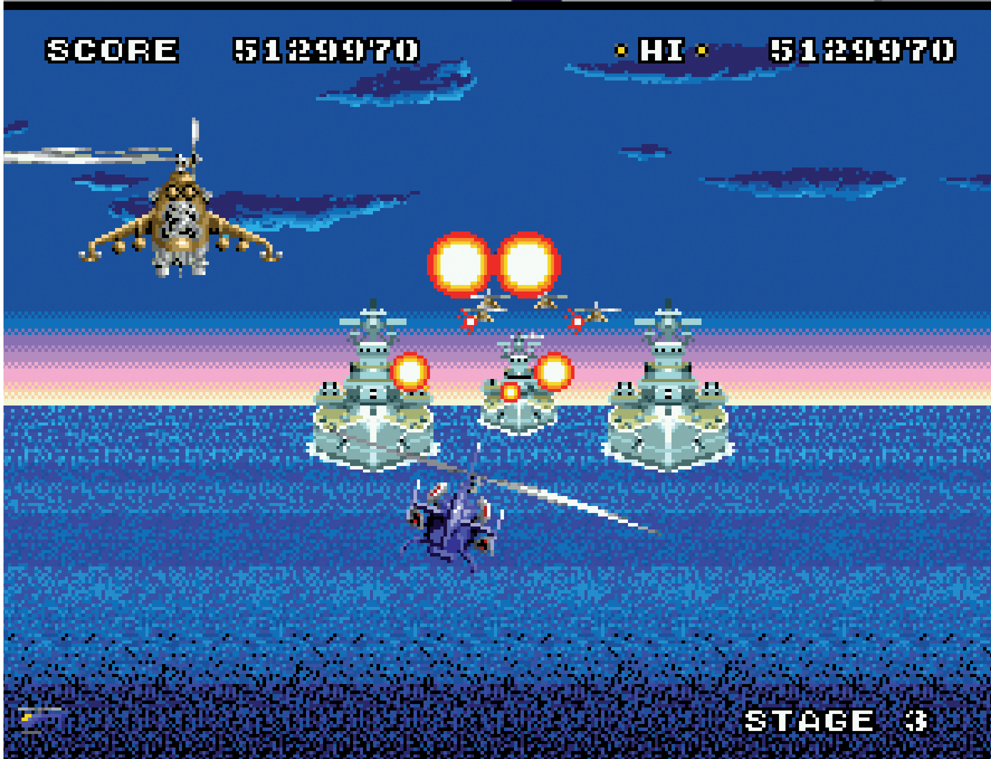
HISTORY

Sometimes a lengthy hiatus from a game can spell disaster for your nostalgia levels. One such example for me is *Super Thunder Blade*. What was once exciting and enjoyable is now a painful and frustrating game that almost feels like you're steering a helicopter through a world made of giant scabs and cardboard boxes.

Released in 1987, the original *Thunder Blade* came out during that late-Eighties boom of novelty Sega sit-down arcades. Its cab took the shape of a futuristic helicopter seat, and the chopper that you steered in the game was controlled using a gearstick and a throttle. This peripheral gimmickry and an obvious connection with TV show *Airwolf* was enough to draw in the punters and helped them to look past the game's obvious flaws – me included – and an SMS port was quickly turned around a year later. Fast-forward a couple of years, and – to coincide with the launch of the Mega Drive in Japan – Sega released launch sequels for two of its arcade games, *Space Harrier* and *Thunder Blade*.

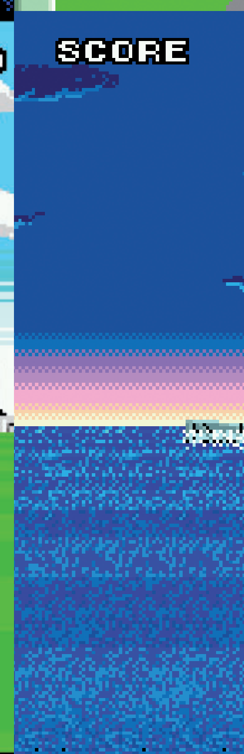
Super Thunder Blade retained the faux-3D stylings of the arcade original but exposed the failing of the first game – that it tried too hard to impress. It spread itself too thin across two varying perspectives – face-on and top-down – and failed to shine in either. While the controls feel sturdy enough, the 3D sections feel amazingly washy and the overhead boss sections lack any sense of excitement – usually involving simply steering your 'copter left to right while pressing fire. And unless you can be bothered to memorise a safe flight path through all the chaos, the ridiculous amount of firepower the game continually blows in your face can be overwhelming at times.

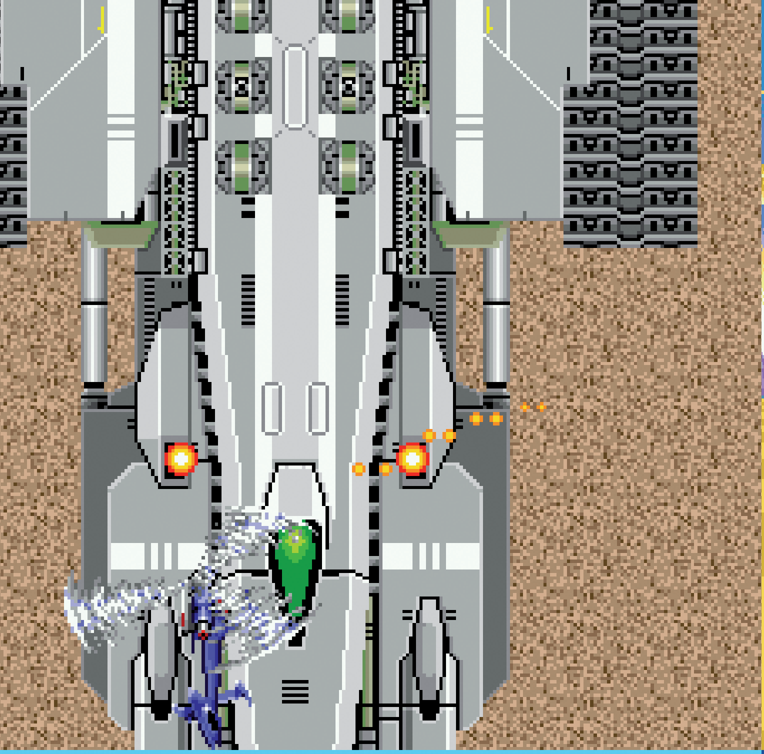
It's a shame that Sega didn't spend a little more time ironing out the little niggles that would have otherwise made this game a real classic. If you're a fan of *Space Harrier* you might want to give this a whirl, otherwise we urge you to seek out the sublime *Under Defeat* for a great example of a proper 'copter blaster.





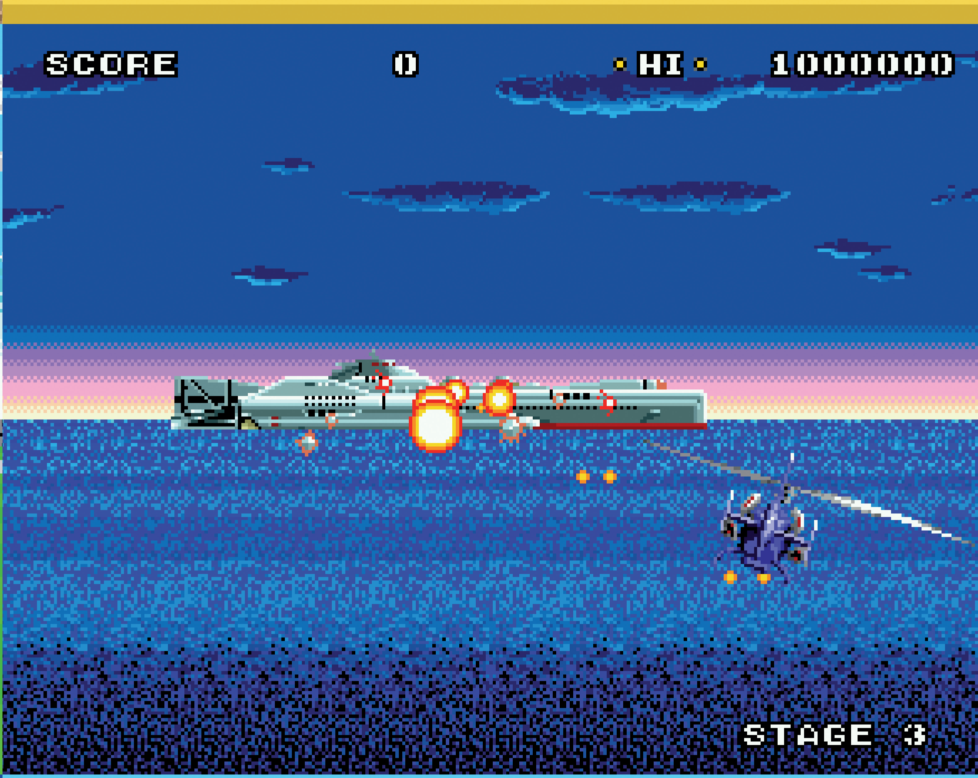


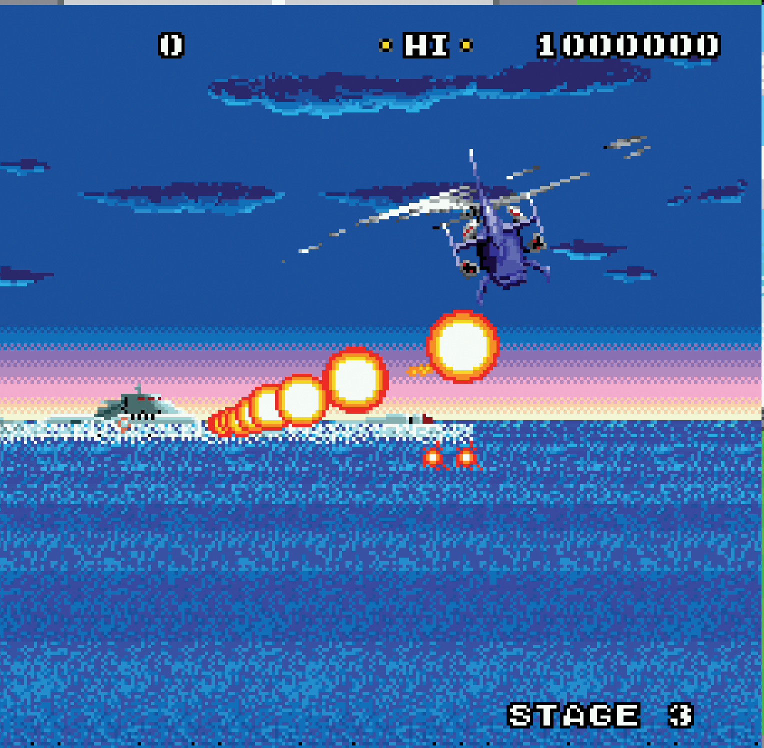


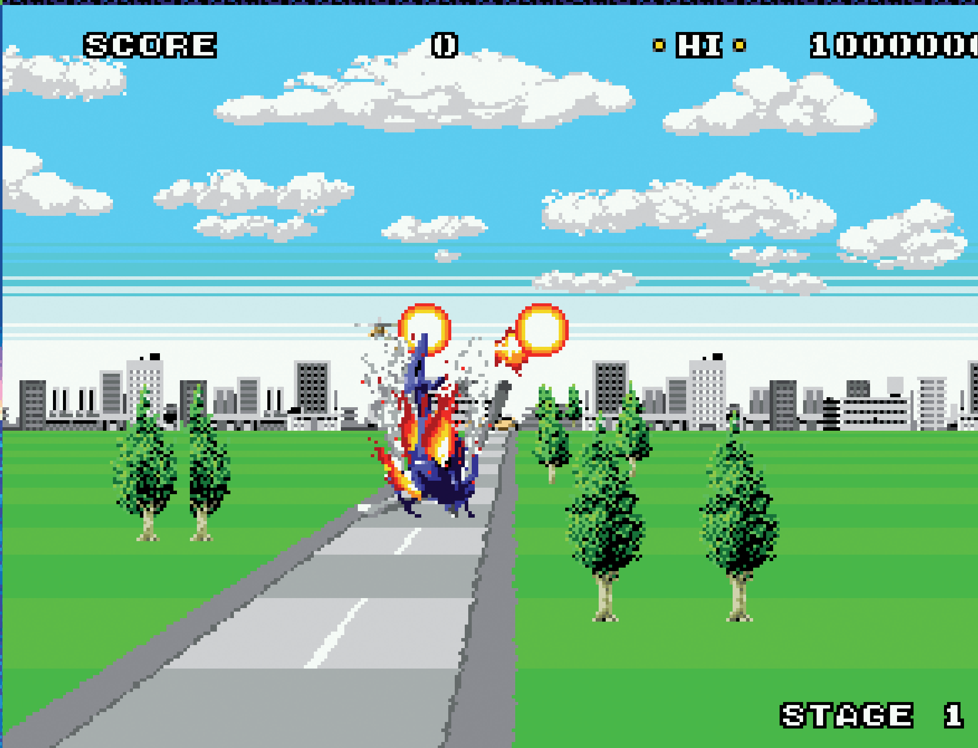



SCORE 2781330
HI 2781330
STAGE 2


0
HI 1000000
STAGE 1


SCORE 0
HI 1000000
STAGE 3


0
HI 1000000
STAGE 3


SCORE 0
HI
STAGE 1

THE MAKING OF...

DYNAMITE DAN 1&2



Most readers will have dabbled with games programming at one time or another. Back in 1985, Rod Bowkett dabbled and created Dynamite Dan, one of the most memorable platform games of the 8-bit era. In an exclusive interview, Martyn Carroll finds out how he exploded onto the scene – and disappeared just as quickly



» Unless you're particularly looking for a watery grave, it's best not to play around the well.



» Having collected all eight sticks of dynamite and blown open the safe door, you just need to grab the plans and leg it back.

Trying to track down the man behind the *Dynamite Dan* games was not easy, mainly because web searches turn up two other Rod Bowketts who have also enjoyed varying degrees of fame. There's Rod Bowkett, the keyboardist, who was a member of prog-folk group Stackridge in the early Seventies and co-wrote several songs on the 1975 album *Extravaganza*. And then there's Rod Bowkett, the music producer and composer, who's worked with a number of recent chart acts, including Kosheen, Beth Rowley and Corinne Bailey Rae. These decoys mean that attempts to track down Rod Bowkett, the Spectrum programmer, inevitably lead to the other two.

But as the search deepened, the strands started to pull together. A music journalist reviewing Corinne Bailey Rae's debut album suggested that the Rod who co-wrote two of the tracks and the Rod who played keyboards in Stackridge were probably one and the same. And the *Dynamite Dan* games were famous for their brilliantly colourful graphics and, crucially, their surprisingly tuneful soundtracks (at least, relative to Spectrum audio of the era). Could it be that the three Rods were actually one multi-talented Rod?

A quick email to Rod posing that very question was answered with a brief "Yes". Fantastic! A second email asking if he'd be happy to be interviewed in *RG* was met with an equally succinct "Okay". Even better, although the curtness of his replies suggested that he might not be too keen to be chatting about some silly games he wrote more than 20 years ago. Happily, when we later spoke to him over the phone, he was chatty, engaging and keen to reminisce – although he was somewhat surprised that out of all his endeavours, it was *Dynamite Dan* he should find himself remembering. We, in turn, were equally surprised when he revealed how he got into gaming and how *Dynamite Dan* came about.

"You have to go right back," he tells us. "I did my degree in Maths so I've always had a mathematical background, but as soon as I'd finished my degree in Sussex I got straight into playing in bands, and shortly after that I joined Stackridge and I was in music for a very long time. Then in the mid-Eighties, I'd just come out of my last record deal with Magnet and I was getting to the end of my life span as an artist – my mid-30s, or at least it was in those days! So I bought a Spectrum for fun and got really hooked on assembler as I'd never tried it before. *Dynamite Dan* was more of a project really to learn and write in assembler."

Yes, *Dan* was the result of Rod experimenting with code. You'd imagine that such a polished title would follow several practice efforts, including the obligatory *Space Invaders* clone, but it was his very first game, commercial or otherwise. A bigger surprise still was the speed at which everything happened. "It took me six months to develop *Dynamite Dan*, and that included learning assembler. For a lot of that time I had my head in books, trying to figure out how to do things. I bought a few cassettes, including *Jetpac*, *Manic*



IN THE KNOW

- » **PUBLISHERS:** MIRRORSOFT
- » **DEVELOPER:** ROD BOWKETT
- » **RELEASED:** 1985/6
- » **PLATFORMS:** SPECTRUM, CPC, C64, MSX-1
- » **GENRE:** PLATFORM
- » **EXPECT TO PAY:** AROUND £2 EACH



> "Six months from buying a Spectrum to having a number one game. It was extraordinary."

» You can travel beneath the mansion on a raft, but be careful – falling in the water leads to an instant game over.



» The MSX-1 version, which was converted by Mr Micro, featured its own unique loading screen. They managed to misspell Rod's surname, however.



THE MAKING OF...

DYNAMITE DAN 1&2

Conversion Capers



**THE ORIGINAL *DYNAMITE* ***Dan* was released on several formats, but the sequel only appeared on the Spectrum and the Amstrad CPC. The CPC conversion was done by Keith Goodyer, a self-taught programmer with no commercial games under his belt. "*Dynamite Dan II* was a significant event in my life," says Keith, who learnt to programme on a Commodore PET at school. "One evening I got a call from a guy who represented Mirrorsoft, and he asked if I was interested in doing a conversion for £3,000. Without knowing a dot of Z80, I agreed. Oh, and there was one condition – it had to be completed in three weeks to meet the Christmas publishing deadline. I was sent a shiny new CPC and a printout of Rod's source code. The first two weeks were spent retyping the source into my DASM assembler, and this taught me everything I needed to know about the Z80 CPU. The principle I used was to get the Spectrum version running on the Amstrad's CPU, then I rewrote his rendering routines to be compatible with the CPC's Mode 1. I really wanted to do it properly with Mode 0 graphics but I wasn't a graphics designer so I came up with the idea of stippling the eight-colour Spectrum graphics to create the illusion of many colours in the four-colour Mode 1. The way Rod had written his code made it very easy to port – it was probably some of the neatest, well-documented code I have ever seen. I remember delivering the final masters to the Mirrorsoft offices on the morning of the deadline, and celebrating my first commercial game by having pie and mash in a cafe across the road."



Miner and *Jet Set Willy*, although I wasn't a huge fan of games – it was more a case of looking at them to see how they worked. I just used the bog-standard Spectrum, rubber keyboard and everything, and lots of Microdrives, which were the most unreliable storage medium known to man – you had to keep six copies of everything. So yeah, six months from buying a Spectrum to having a number one game in the charts. It was an extraordinary thing."

It's not hard to see why *Dan* leapt to the top of the charts when it debuted on the Spectrum in the summer of 1985. The game was advertised heavily by publisher Mirrorsoft and it picked up brilliant reviews across the board. There were thumbs up from the *Crash* guys who gave it 94% and a Crash Smash, saying it was "highly playable, fun and addictive", back when it was still cool for games to be addictive. *Sinclair User* awarded the game with five stars out of five and ended the review with some pertinent consumer advice: "Forget *Jet Set Willy 2* and fork out the folding stuff instead for *Dynamite Dan*."

The timing of the release was certainly important. *Jet Set Willy 2* had appeared the previous month to decidedly lukewarm reviews. Platform fans had been waiting for the next *Miner Willy* adventure for over a year, and when it finally arrived, more than six months late, it was merely a reworked version of Matthew Smith's original with lots of new rooms and little else. In many ways, *Dynamite Dan* was there to pick up the slack. It was strongly inspired by *Jet Set Willy*, with the exact same setup (explore a mansion, avoid the nasties, find the collectables), yet it grabbed *Miner Willy*'s mantel and ran with it, taking platform gaming on the Spectrum to dizzying new heights. It looked fantastic for a start – each screen was uniquely designed and simply alive with colour and movement.

The sound was great too, from the title screen's tune (a jolly Mozart rendition) to the spot effects and snippets of music that played throughout the game. Best of all, there was so much stuff to mess around with, like the trampolines that propelled Dan up to high ledges and the teleporters that whizzed him off to different rooms. You could also travel between floors using the handy lift, or jump on the raft that floated on an underground river.

"It was my first game," says Rod, "so I just kind of made it up as I went along, and to be honest it looks a bit like that. I just bolted things on to try ideas out, and if I liked it I left it in. I played around with colours a lot, because the Spectrum was so primitive. I suppose I limited my graphics as much as possible to the 8 x 8-pixel squares, pretty much the same sort of thing as *Manic Miner*. I remember spending an enormous amount of time on the Dan sprite, as he was the icon in the game so I wanted to get it really good, right down to the wisp of his hair being made out of two pixels!"

As for the barmy plot – which saw top agent Dan attempting to steal top secret plans from Dr Blitzen's cliff-top retreat – there was more than a hint of James Bond about it. Dan even arrived in a zeppelin, just like the one seen in that year's 007 movie, *A View to a Kill*. "Bond was an obvious influence," he reveals, "although Dr Blitzen was actually based on the Mekon from Dan Dare – the alien with the large head who floated around on a dish. Basically, it's just a ragbag of things I remember from my early childhood. A friend of mine suggested calling the assistant

» You had to tread carefully in the caves as some of the bridges were weak, causing you to fall through.



» Once you had the record in your possession (its placement was random), it was just a case of finding the island's jukebox.







» In the sequel, your wild-haired nemesis whizzed about on his floating dish, trying to zap you.



» *Dynamite Dan* creator Rod Bowkett, pictured here in the heady 1980s.

Donna as a joke – Donna and Blitzen – and I let it stick."

When the game was finished, dodgy jokes and all, Rod began looking for a publisher and he began by knocking on Mirrorsoft's door. "They were the first people I went to and they seemed really keen, so I let them have it. I remember going up in the lift with Maxwell – it was really quite daunting. I didn't have much to do to be honest as it was more of a marketing exercise. I did do one of the trade fairs and all these young kids were racing after me, asking me questions about *Dynamite Dan*. It was a bit like being the Pied Piper! It was bizarre."

The publisher asked for no changes to be made, although the game's rock-hard difficulty was called into question. "The guys at Mirrorsoft play-tested the game and they all thought it was too hard, but I thought that unless it was reasonably hard people would just consume it like an ice cream. That was my logic anyway. Besides, I could do it! I played it every day to test it. It was all about timing." The game was tough but fair. If you hit a nasty you'd lose a life but you wouldn't be returned to the start of the screen, as you were in *Jet Set Willy*, and there were certainly no infinite death loops. Any doubters should pop along to The RZX Archive (**www.rzxarchive.co.uk**) where you can download a recording of *RG*'s own Richard Burton completing the game unaided in just 15 minutes.

> **"All these kids were racing after me, asking me questions. It was a bit like being the Pied Piper"**

In return for publishing rights, Rod was given a small advance and some royalties on each copy sold. The deal allowed Mirrorsoft to go off and commission ports to other platforms and versions for the Commodore 64, Amstrad CPC and MSX-1 soon followed – none of which Rod had anything to do with. "In total I made about £15,000 out of *Dynamite Dan*, which wasn't a fortune, but it was great because I wasn't expecting to make anything so I was delighted." Such was the level of success that Mirrorsoft wanted more. "I was asked to do a sequel. Begged to, in fact. And they gave me a really good advance for it."

With the money in the bank, Rod wasn't about to knock out a quick and careless follow-up. For *Dynamite Dan II*, which had a George Lucas-worthy subtitle of *Dr Blitzen and the Islands of Arcanum*, he used his burgeoning programming skills to create a bigger and better game. "I squeezed a lot more in on the second one, and that was the big thrust for doing a sequel. Having done it before, I was able to sketch out exactly what I wanted to do and allocate memory to it. I used a lot of compression tricks to squeeze

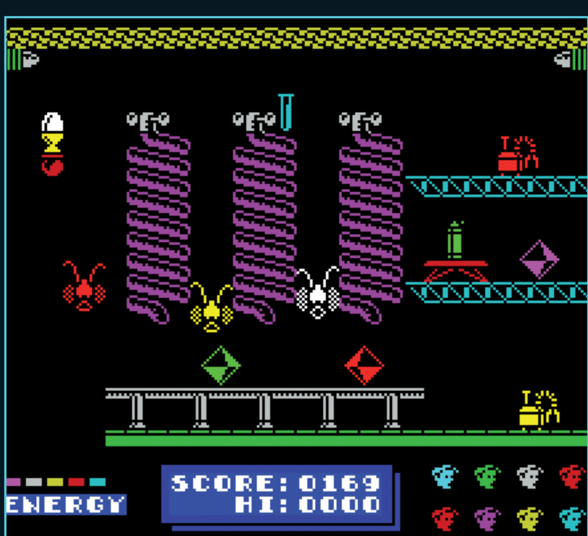
DEVELOPER HIGHLIGHTS

DYNAMITE DAN
SYSTEM: SPECTRUM, CPC, C64, MSX-1
YEAR: 1985

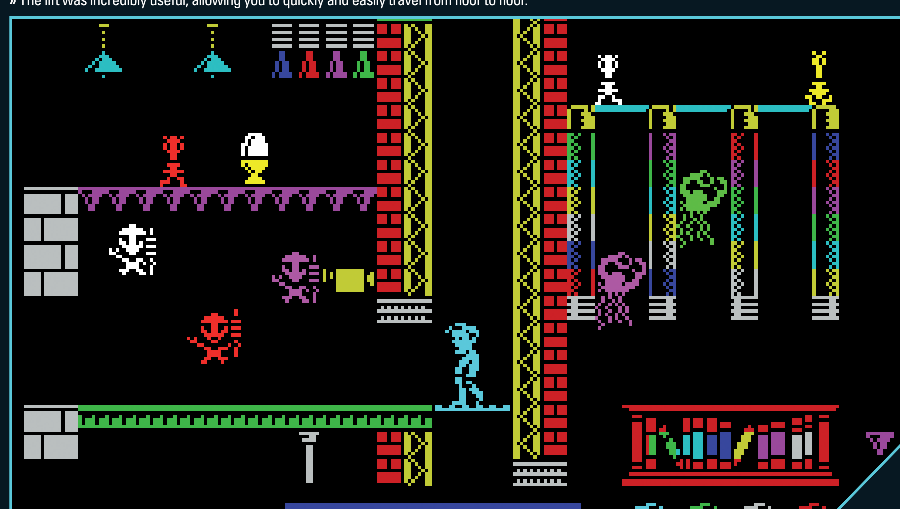
DYNAMITE DAN II
SYSTEM: SPECTRUM, CPC
YEAR: 1986

FERNANDEZ MUST DIE
(PICTURED)
SYSTEMS: AMIGA, ST
YEAR: 1988





» The lift was incredibly useful, allowing you to quickly and easily travel from floor to floor.



THE MAKING OF... DYNAMITE DAN 1&2



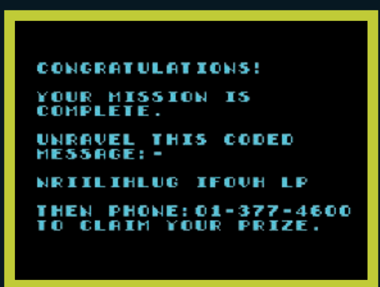


» One of Blitzen's jukeboxes made a cameo appearance in the first game.



» The Commodore 64 version was a fairly straight port of the Spectrum original, with the main difference being a multicoloured main sprite.

Up, up and away

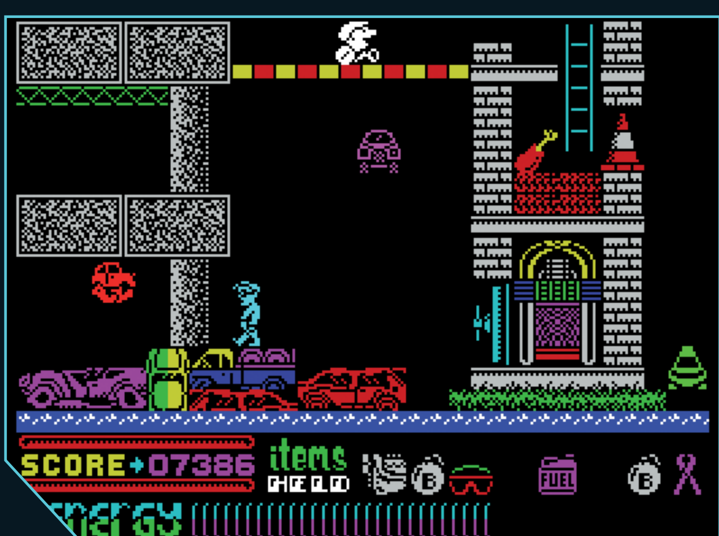


DYNAMITE DAN OWED a great deal to *Jet Set Willy*, to the extent that Mirrorsoft even copied the idea of giving a prize to the first person to complete the game. If you managed to escape Blitzen's lair with the secret plans, the completion screen asked you to crack a code (NRIILIHLUG IROVH LP) and ring Mirrorsoft's offices with the answer. The prize for the first person to do so was a balloon trip over London. "Some kid won it incredibly quickly," remembers Rod. "I think it was during the second week of release. I couldn't believe it." In case you were wondering, to crack the code you simply had to reverse each letter's position in the alphabet to spell out MIRRORSOFT RULES OK.

everything in. I used multi-level coding, so there was the 8 x 8 sprite level and I would put all of the blocks in an array and index into those. For sprite animation, like everyone else, I would unpack sprites when they were on the screen so you didn't have to do real-time scrolling. And then things like Dan's goggles, which he could pick up, were simply individual graphics that were overlaid on top of the sprite in the unpack routine. I basically did everything I could to save memory, and there was lots and lots of code devoted to doing just that. I also went to a lot of trouble with the sound, which is funny now as it sounds hideous. I was trying to do a polyphonic sound and I only partially succeeded. It was all interrupt-driven – what a nightmare! Looking back, I don't think the sequel was better than the original, but I did get a lot more in."

There certainly was more to see and do in *Dynamite Dan II*. The original game had 48 screens, while the sequel had 192 divided over eight differently themed islands. The plot this time around was extra bonkers, with Blitzen trying to hypnotise the nation's kids using mind-melting pop records (a none-too-subtle dig at the manufactured music scene of the mid-Eighties). To thwart his evil plan, Dan had to find a record on each island, play it in an old jukebox and then refuel his zeppelin in order to reach the next island. Besides the records and the fuel cans, which were necessary to complete each island, there were other collectable objects which had various effects on the gameplay. There were also special items that had various effects, like making Dan invisible or opening up secret passages. In fact, one of these items is the cause of some controversy. According to the

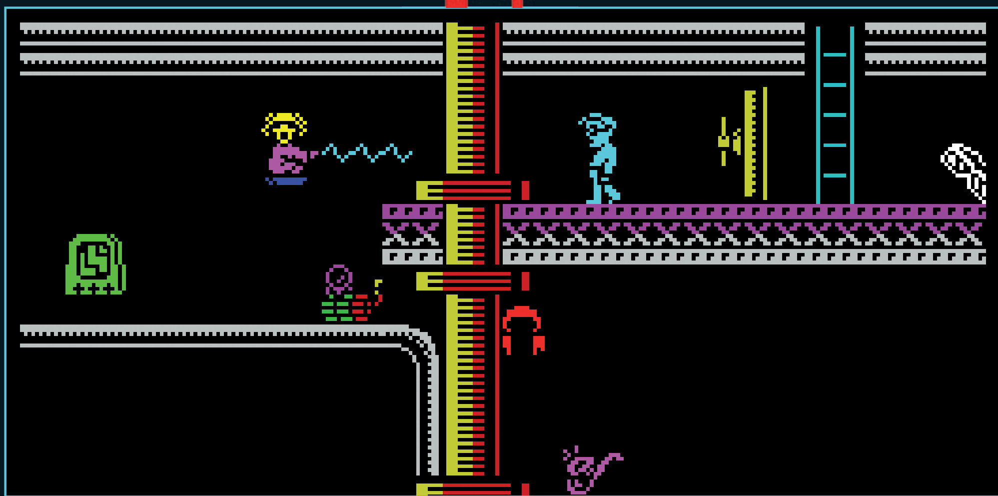
> "Looking back I don't think the sequel was better than the original, but I got a lot more in"



» The bizarre fifth island is a mash-up of Terry Gilliam's brilliant *Monty Python* animations and The Beatles' classic *Yellow Submarine* psychedelia.







» That's the time bomb beneath Blitzen, but it's useless as there's nowhere to plant it.



instructions, the time bomb found on the final island should be used to blow up Blitzen's secret laboratory, but there doesn't appear to be any lab, and if you return to the zeppelin the game just ends abruptly. "I'm sure I wouldn't have left out the lab," says Rod, when asked about the ending. "It doesn't sound like something I'd do, but in all honestly I can't remember, so I guess that will become an eternal mystery." Since speaking to Rod, a disassembly of his code has been posted on the World of Spectrum forums and it confirms that there is indeed no proper ending to the game. Still, even this omission cannot take the shine off what is surely the most technically accomplished and fun-to-play platform game on the Spectrum.

Dynamite Dan II was released in May 1986, earning the triple crown from the Spectrum magazines – a Crash Smash, Sinclair User Classic and Your Sinclair Megagame. Despite critical success, sales of the sequel were disappointing. "It didn't sell anywhere near as well as the first one. I don't know the exact numbers but I think it only sold around a quarter of what the original managed." As such, Dan jumped aboard his blimp and floated off into the sunset, never to be seen again (there's no substance behind the reported Spectrum 128K version of *Dynamite Dan II*).

Rod followed suit and retired his rubber-keyed Speccy, although he programmed one more game – the Amiga and ST conversions of Tony Crowther's C64 shooter *Fernandez Must Die*. "I hated doing *Fernandez* and I did it just for the money," he says, talking about life after Dan. "I had to learn the 68000 for it, which wasn't such a bad thing as I used it on much more interesting projects. I started to do a few synth editors and then I was asked to team-lead a really big project – a million-pound project – for an absurdly ambitious sequencer for the Atari ST called *Virtuoso*. It changed my life as they paid me a lot of money, but in the end it was just too ambitious and they ran out of money. So when that ended I just went back to music, and that's where I've remained. I've since toyed with the idea of returning to games but to be honest I think I'm a bit long in the tooth for all that now. Music is easier. And more fun. I'm doing really well as a songwriter now, so I've got no regrets about leaving games behind."

The *Dynamite Dan* games were just two years out of Rod's life, yet they were enough to propel him to hero status in the eyes of many Spectrum owners. On reflection, he finds this both surprising and flattering: "I've spent the vast majority of my life as a musician. There have been a lot of phases in my life where I'd done things that have almost worked but not quite, so it's quite gratifying that the *Dynamite Dan* games are still remembered. Maybe I should put the Dan sprite on my tombstone."

That's a great idea. But to avoid any confusion, just make sure the accompanying inscription reads: 'There's only one Rod Bowkett.'



» Rod's only other gaming credit is the 16-bit version of *Fernandez Must Die*, which is a pretty decent *Ikari Warriors* clone.



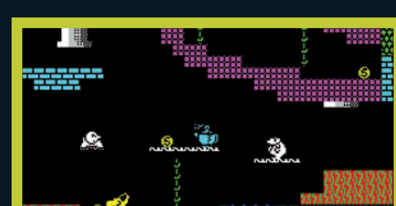
Influences

WHAT IT RIPPED OFF

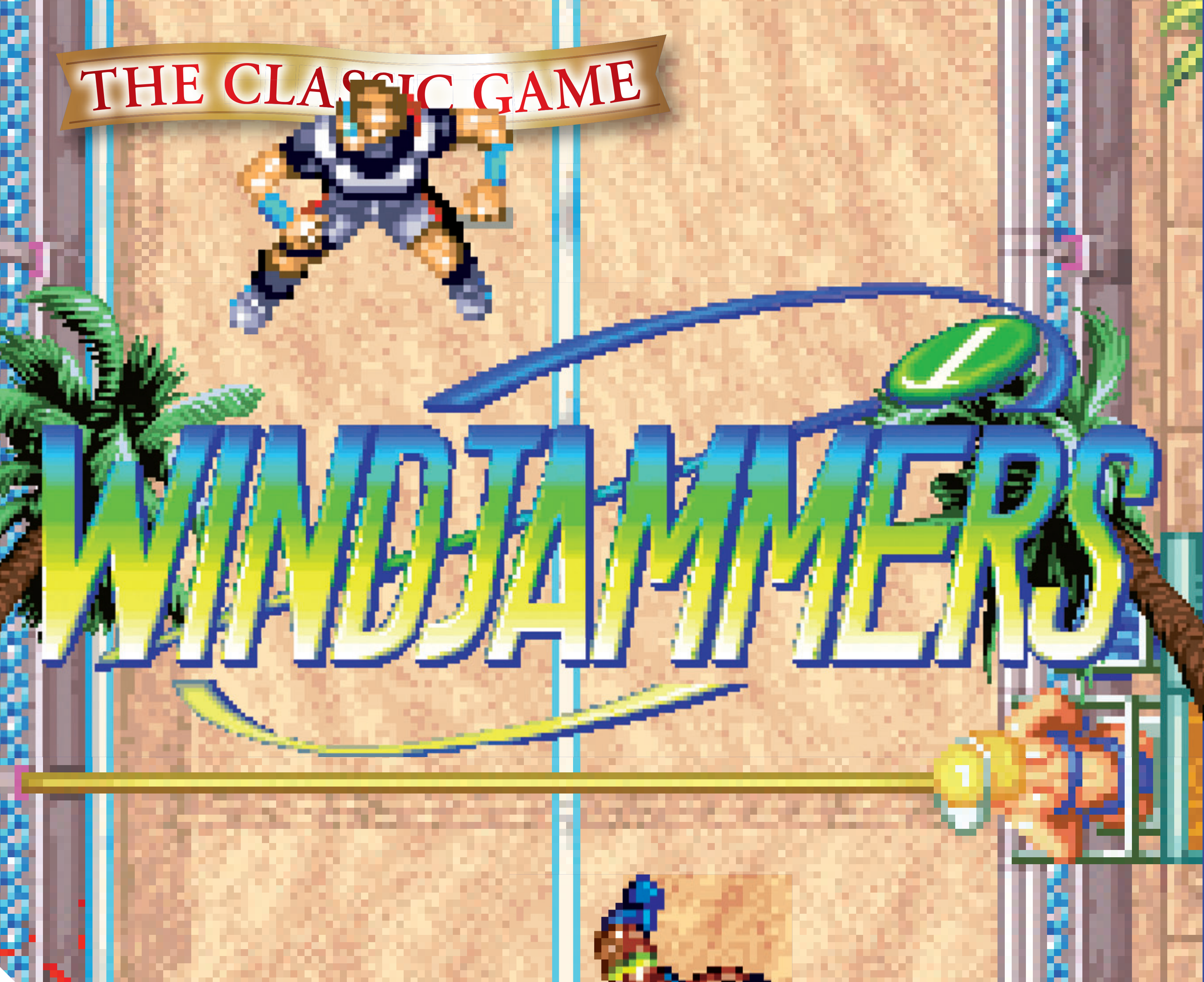


***DYNAMITE DAN* WAS** strongly influenced by the *Miner Willy* games, in particular *Jet Set Willy* and the way it encouraged you to explore and plot your own path through the mansion. The graphic styles of both games are also very similar, with single-coloured backgrounds used to minimise colour clash.

WHAT IT INSPIRED



THE FIRST GAME will be best remembered for reigniting the rapidly stagnating platform genre and proving that there was left in the old dog yet. Without the success of *Dan*, we wonder if Gremlin would have continued with *Monty Mole*, or if Codemasters would have shown so much faith in *Dizzy*?



The frisbee is a throwing device that dates back as far as the Fifties, when secret agents used to ferry codes by stuffing them in blueberry pies and throwing them to each other in parks. Over time this peculiar method of covert communication became widely accepted by the mainstream and was quickly turned into a competitive sport by some clever academics in college sweatshirts. Given its fast rate of popularity, in the future it's likely frisbee will be bigger than football, bigger than wrestling and quite probably bigger than darts. For the future we need look no further than the Neo Geo. Welcome to the future of the blueberry pie ladies and gentleman, welcome to the sport of *Windjammers*.



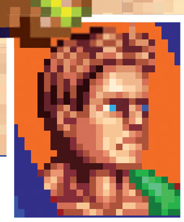
Hiromi Mita
The only female in the competition, gender stereotyping makes Hiromi the fastest but wimpiest character in the game. Choose her if you want a challenge.



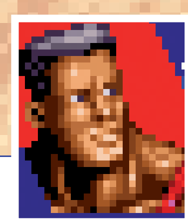
Behoo Yoo
Korean Windjammer pro B.Yoo is the best character for beginners. He's agile – making easy work of defending your goal, and has the best special move.



Jordi Costa
Spanish Jordi Costa is another great all-round character. His special attack forces the disc to zig-zag wildly towards your opponent's goal, making them panic.



Loris Biaggi
Italian Loris Biaggi is another strong competitor. His signature toss causes the disc to windmill towards the goal. Shame it's easy to block.



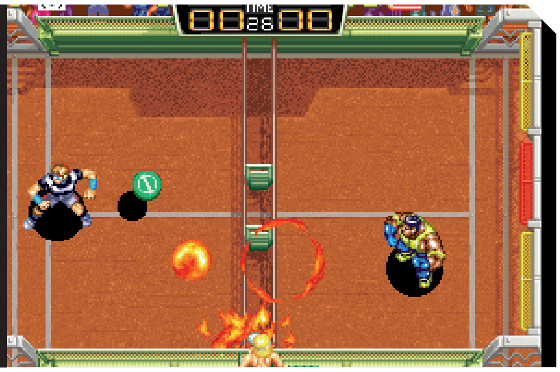
Gary Scott
Gary is one of the strongest in the game and his special, which forces the disc to skim violently against the sidewalls, is one of the strongest moves.



Klaus Wessel
Klaus is the slowest character in the game, but what he lacks in speed he makes up for in strength and a surname that sounds like a Dutch ferret.

MEMORABLE MOMENTS

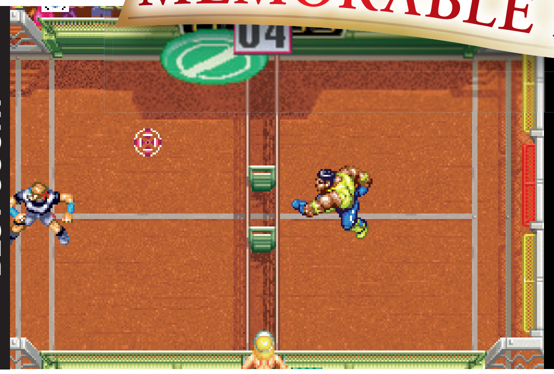
WHY IS IT A CLASSIC?



The best frisbee-throwing game ever

Part of the brilliance of *Windjammers* is that it's easy to get to grips with. It looks great and scoring is brilliantly satisfying. The game's essentially a spiritual successor to *Pong,* but it borrows the burly aesthetics of *Speedball* and the outrageous special moves, wowing gamers in fighting games of the time. Loosely based on a mix of volleyball and tennis, players stand at either side of the court and have 30 seconds with which to score 12 points by firing the disc into their opponent's goal. Getting a frisbee into the yellow zones awards you three points, red is five points, and failure to catch it awards your challenger two points.

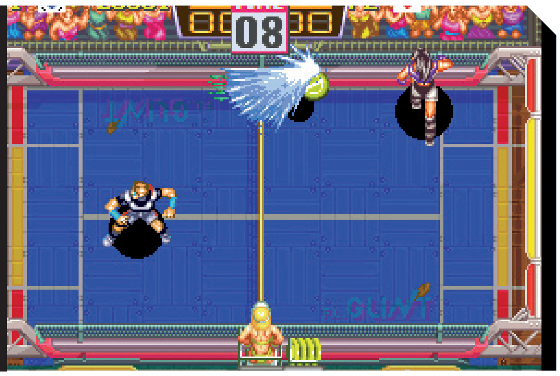
BEST COURT



Clay and concrete

There are two courts in the game – clay and concrete – that mix things up a shade by having obstructions perched on their nets. If the frisbee comes in contact with these barriers it is deflected – often spelling a disaster for your opponent if they're not quick enough to react. So using these obstacles can often prove to be a great strategy. In the clay court they sit in the centre of the net, meaning it's possible to dip in and out of using them quite effectively. On the concrete court the barriers are spaced further apart. This affects your accuracy and defences to the point where winning feels more a like case of bare-faced luck.

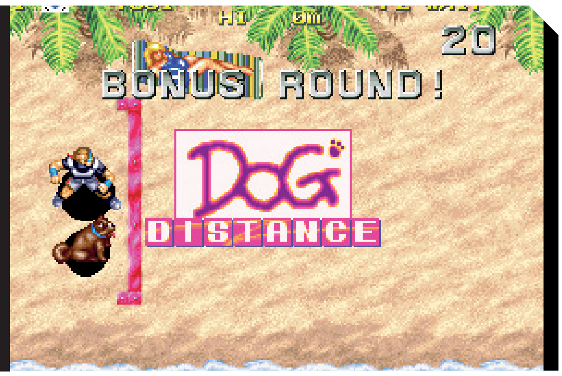
BEST MOVE



The cushion shot

There are some outrageously over-the-top moves in *Windjammers* (in a frisbee-throwing sense), but B.Yoo (who is replaced with Steve Miller in the PAL version) has a real crowd stunner. Surrounded in a menacing cloud of blue aura, Behoo will smash the flying saucer so hard against the side of the court that it sticks to it like white on rice before spinning towards its target. It actually feels similar to performing a cushion shot in pool, and is just as satisfying. As a result it never grows tiring, and it can often prove a great move to draw opponents to one end of the court and punish them with a sneaky return into the space you made.

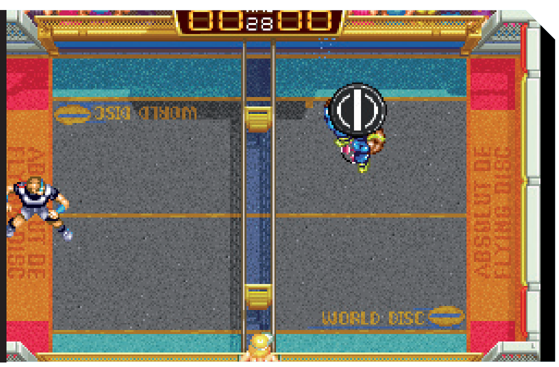
STANDOUT MOMENT



The fetching mini-games

To break up the single-player tournament there are two beat 'em up style bonus rounds. Both are brilliant and both would actually make pretty good events in a *Hyper Sports*-style *Windjammers* spin-off title. One of the sub games – Flying Disc Bowling – is a version of bowling (obviously) but using frisbees. The second – Dog Distance – is a game of go-fetch that works by tossing a frisbee high into the sky for a dog to catch. When the frisbee is thrown the player, controlling the mutt, has to catch the saucer while avoiding the various bikini-clad obstructions that are sunbathing on the ground.

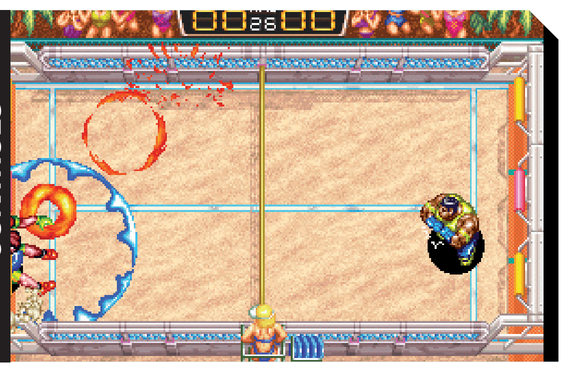
MULTIPLAYER



It's wonderfully addictive

Windjammers is a brilliant multiplayer game. It's so easy to while away several weeks of your life on it, not to mention the risk of developing Carpal Tunnel Syndrome. It's also the closest example we've ever seen of a sports game with one-on-one fighter leanings. Okay, so the six characters in the game might not be a patch on the Bogard Brothers or hold a candle to the entire cast of *Street Fighter,* but they do feel interesting enough to make you want to sample their different skills, and their dazzling-looking specials you can employ also help to give them a bit more individuality.

CONTROLS



Simply brilliant

It's also worth mentioning how brilliant the controls in are in *Windjammers.* There's an impressive amount of moves in the game, which are all performed using an idiot-proof joystick and two-button control configuration. The fire buttons basically act as high and low returns – although the high spins are often risky as they're easier to block and allow your opponent the opportunity to charge-up a special attack. Using this combination, it's possible to perform curve throws, specials, lobs, signature moves and even parry your opponent's specials and return them to sender.



What the press said… ages ago

All Game Guide (80%)

"*Windjammers* is a spiritual successor to *Pong,* and fans of that old classic will find *Windjammers* to be a great deal of fun. Gamers who like fast and furious action will also like *Windjammers,* though the short length of its games will disappoint some."

Defunct Games (89%)

"As two player games go, *Windjammers* is just about the most fun you can have pushing buttons rapidly. There is enough technique to keep die-hard gamers happy, and it's really just a lot of fun to play."

What we think

Despite the simplistic nature of the game (it's *Pong,* basically), there's plenty of variety to keep everyone glued to the game. The presentation and additional mini-games are a wonderful little touch and the multiplayer sports action is some of the best you're likely to find on the Neo Geo.



IN THE KNOW

- **PLATFORM:** NEO GEO ARCADE
- **DEVELOPER:** DATA EAST
- **PUBLISHER:** SNK
- **RELEASED:** 1994
- **GENRE:** SPORTS
- **EXPECT TO PAY:** £40



THE DEFINITIVE METAL SLUG

STUART CAMPBELL RETURNS FROM BEHIND ENEMY LINES TO BRING YOU THE DEFINITIVE LOWDOWN ON SNK'S METAL SLUG FRANCHISE

With a modern gaming environment that, thanks to XBLA, PSN and the DS, is more 2D-friendly than it's been in close to 20 years, it's easy to forget just how startling the sudden appearance of *Metal Slug* in 1996 was. I still remember the first time I encountered it, in a local arcade otherwise stuffed full of huge multiplayer Sega simulator cabinets running games like *Sega Rally* and *Daytona USA* and the long-forgotten *Desert Tank*. Shoved in a corner, near the change machine was something that looked like a relic from a bygone age that someone had forgotten to chuck in a skip. Your reporter and his videogame-journalist colleague did a double-take of proper disbelief at the unmarked, unassuming generic cabinet – was this *really* an old-school SNES-style 2D platform shooter? – and dropped a few coins in the slot.

An hour later we were still there, a few quid lighter in the pocket but still marvelling at the sheer character and fun of what we were playing, at a time when almost all arcade games had become incredibly po-faced and serious, increasingly concerned with 'realism' over the instant-fun hit that had been traditionally the preserve of the coin-op. (The only other 2D games that had survived the industry's excited fascination with the possibilities of polygonal 3D were fighting games – extremely serious in their own way, and jealously colonised by obsessives.) Compared to anything else that was in arcades in 1996, *Metal Slug* was like *Robotron* – an exhilarating non-stop bloodbath with beautiful pixel art and a sense of humour. (More accurately, it was the arcade equivalent of Treasure's 1993 Mega Drive masterpiece *Gunstar Heroes*.)

It turned out that we weren't the only people craving some trad-style gameplay values, and *Metal Slug* went on to be a huge and unexpected hit, gobbling money faster than SNK could hire trucks to carry it all off in. And we all know what that means in the videogames business – sequel after sequel after sequel. So join The Definitive one more time as we strap on an ammo belt, wade into the fray, and see if we can't get to the bottom of who that pesky Liquid Ocelot really is once and for all! (That's *Metal Gear Solid* – Ed)

THE DEFINITIVE METAL SLUG

1996

METAL SLUG (ARCADE, NEO-GEO, NEO-GEO CD)

Uniquely for the time, *Metal Slug* was, of course, running on hardware that gamers could already access in their own home. But with cartridges for the home version of the Neo-Geo selling for £200 and upwards at a time, SNK desperately wanted to find a way of targeting the more mainstream home-gaming market, and in 1994 it had come up with the Neo-Geo CD, a console that had essentially the same hardware as the MVS (arcade) and AES (home) incarnations of the system, but loaded games via a CD drive rather than ROM carts. While CD games cost less than a quarter of the price of their cartridge big brothers, the drive was murderously slow – loading times of up to a minute between levels weren't uncommon – and SNK needed an extra carrot to tempt reluctant buyers. CD versions of games, then, sometimes found themselves with new original content or game modes, and *Metal Slug* was no exception.

Released a couple of months after the AES cart, *Metal Slug* CD is the same basic game, but also includes Combat School mode – a time attack on any level you've already beaten, where your ammo (not grenades) is unlimited. You get points for beating scores in Combat School, which move you up army ranks. Once you've completed the main game you also unlock Survival mode, where you have to get as far through the entire game as possible with only one life and no vehicles.

Also new to the CD port of *Metal Slug* is the ability to start from any level you've reached – not necessarily completed – with your credits reset to the maximum, making the game easy for anyone to finish (since by using both players, you can have up to ten credits of five lives each), and soon *Metal Slug* players were eager for more.



» The NGCD and PlayStation versions also reveal the names of each level – Mission 1, for example, rather charmingly takes place in Absolute Thick Forest.



» Loading happens early and often in PS *Metal Slug* – there are two disc-access pauses in the middle of Mission 1 alone.

> "Metal Slug was an exhilarating non-stop bloodbath with humour"

1997

METAL SLUG (PLAYSTATION)

As it became clear that the Neo-Geo CD wasn't going to be a hit, SNK turned its attention back to porting its games to other companies' hardware. The Saturn version of *Metal Slug* was a straight conversion of the CD game (complete with Combat School), and in Japan it could be bought with an optional plug-in RAM cart, which speeded up loading and improved the animation. But the PlayStation version which came out a few months later was a much more interesting proposition, despite being visually inferior and (like the Neo-Geo CD port) suffering badly from loading delays.

As well as Combat School it offered Another Story mode, a radical innovation which comprised four brand-new mini-games that played completely differently to the main game. (You can also unlock 'Another Story II', which is the same four mini-games presented from a different plot perspective, with a fascinating transsexual twist at the end. No, really.) Sadly, however, the PS *Metal Slug* was never released in the West, which meant that each mission's objectives were a complete mystery to anyone who couldn't read Japanese, and the mode was effectively unplayable. But it would nevertheless provide the template for home releases for years to come.

1998

METAL SLUG 2 (ARCADE, NEO-GEO, NGCD)

Despite being little more than a new set of levels for the first game (albeit six this time rather than five), and introducing two features that would go on to almost ruin the entire series, *Metal Slug 2* is still pretty good fun. To no purpose at all you can now select from four characters (girls Eri and Fio joining *Metal Slug 1*'s Marco and Tarma), all of whom play identically. Much more worryingly, *MS2* marked the debut of zombies and fat mode, two new inventions that took the fast-moving, all-action gameplay of the original and slowed it to a horrible grinding crawl.

Fortunately, zombies are restricted to one short early section and fat mode isn't too hard to deal with. *MS2* is also almost totally free of later games' predilection for cheap, lazy sections where you're arbitrarily held up on a single screen shooting waves and waves of identical enemies for an age until you're eventually allowed to move on. Instead, you get well-conceived, atmospheric stages, tough but fair bosses, a couple of new weapons to play with and a game that stays fun all the way to the end. It's even got the best plot.



» Just another day at the office for our Marco.



» In ordinary *Metal Slug 2* this is the Mission 1 boss, but here he doesn't appear until Mission 2, as a more powerful mid-boss souped up with the addition of kamikaze tanks.

1999

METAL SLUG: 1ST MISSION (NEO-GEO POCKET)

Initially it's hard to look at *Metal Slug: 1st Mission* with anything but disappointment. Despite running on dedicated SNK hardware – the cute but short-lived Neo-Geo Pocket – the visuals are sparse and crude, and the handheld's two-button controls meant that you had to manually toggle between firing your guns and throwing grenades with an ungainly lurch at the Start button. But once you forgive it for not really being *Metal Slug, 1st Mission* quickly shows itself to be a cute and inventive little platform shooter.

The best change is that there are 16 missions to battle through, most of them just as long as a typical coin-op stage. Other significant differences are that you have an energy bar instead of one-hit lives, and your goal is simply getting to the end, with no scores tallied. (You do get saves and continues, luckily.) There are lots of cute touches, like being captured and having to escape from a prison camp, or ejecting from your plane when it gets shot down and having to play a parachute mini-mission, and the game is fresh and likeable all the way through.

1999

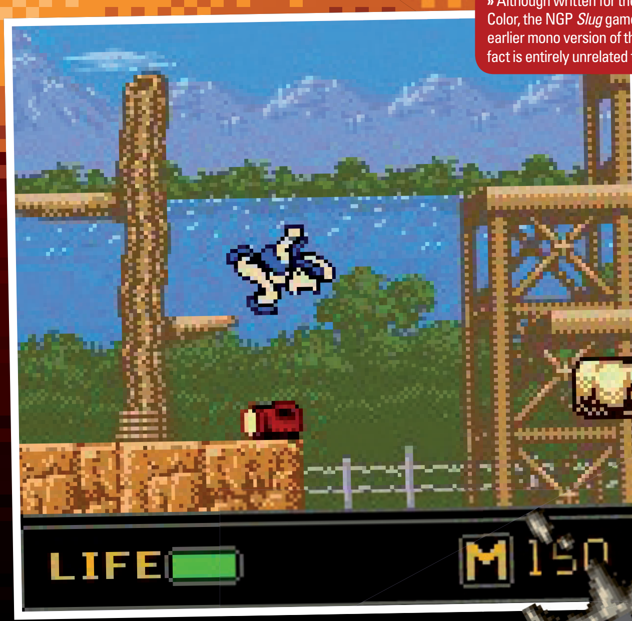
METAL SLUG X (ARCADE, NEO-GEO, PLAYSTATION)

It might only be a toughened-up remix of *Metal Slug 2* – a new colour scheme, a few different enemies and bosses, and a handful of new weapons were pretty much all that differentiated *MSX* from *MS2* – churned out quickly to squeeze more money out of gullible fans, but for discerning *Slug* aficionados this game was the series' high point for a long time, especially as far as home gamers were concerned.

Interestingly, *Metal Slug X* didn't get a Neo-Geo CD release, and it would be two years before players would have the chance to tackle *MSX*'s Combat School, and more besides. The 2001 PS port of *MSX* includes the usual Combat School with its Pin Point and Survival games, but it also gets Another Mission, an all-new mode in the vein of Another Story, but this time featuring around 20 mini-games. In these you again have to play *Metal Slug* in very unfamiliar ways, often in new scenery not present in the main game and often involving being unarmed.

You might have to climb to the top of the stone tower from Mission 2 against the clock, or guard a baby from alien attack as it crawls from one end of a single screen to the other, or leap from missile to missile to reach the end of a short scrolling stage. (There are also more traditional challenges, like shooting down attacking fighters from a tank or with the heavy machine gun.)

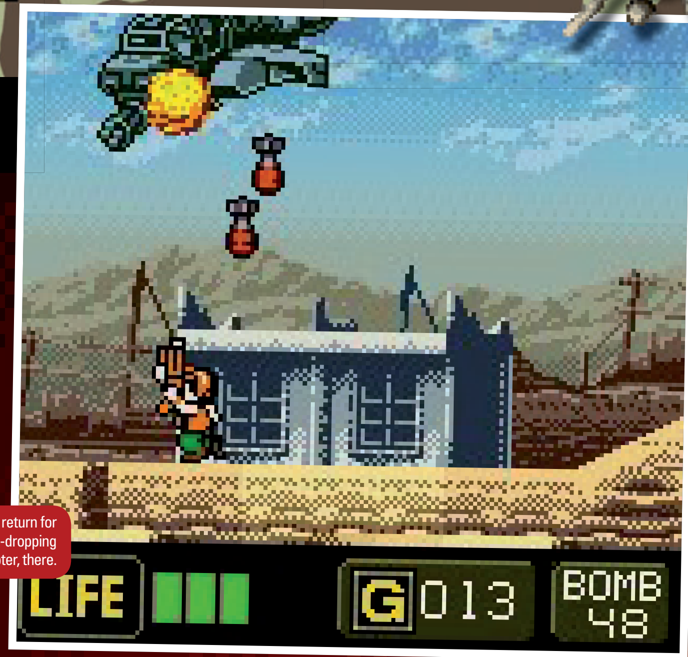
Getting very challenging as you progress through it, Another Mission is practically a whole game by itself, and allied to a good core game and the other two modes makes PS *Metal Slug X* a hefty package.



» Although written for the Neo-Geo Pocket Color, the NGP *Slug* games did run on the earlier mono version of the handheld. That fact is entirely unrelated to this picture.

2000
METAL SLUG: 2ND MISSION (NEO-GEO POCKET)

While it looks pretty similar, the second NGP *Metal Slug* is a very different game to the first. Its 38 missions are generally a lot shorter, yet less linear – often you'll finish a level without ever really knowing what you were supposed to be doing in it, and even more so than in *1st Mission* you get flung from tank to plane to jetpack to on-foot with dizzying speed. On the upside, the controls have been improved a lot, with a dedicated grenade button, and the graphics are a lot bigger and more detailed. In general, though, *2nd Mission* steps just too far away from the *Metal Slug* template, and the loss of focus makes it less enjoyable than its older brother.



» A welcome return for the classic bomb-dropping armoured helicopter, there.

2000
METAL SLUG 3 (ARCADE, NEO-GEO, PS2, XBOX)

As any keen student of philosophy knows, there's supposedly an ancient Chinese proverb that runs: "Most people are fat-headed cretins without enough brains for even one good sandwich", and it's never better illustrated than when people say *Metal Slug 3* is as good as the series got. *Metal Slug 3* isn't even as good as the Black Death got. (Hey I love this game – Ed)

Setting the scene with a tedious and baffling opening mission that pits the player not against enemy soldiers but what appear to be armed squid – Why? It's anyone's guess – and culminating in one of the most epically hateful first-level bosses in recorded videogame history, *Metal Slug 3* itself is a joyless chore from its incomprehensible beginning to the end of the nine-hours-long final stage and frankly doesn't deserve any more words wasted on it in the short space we've got.

The bonus games for the home releases of *MS3* were very different to most of the other titles in the series. There was no Combat School, and no Survival mode – instead, you got two standalone mini-games. Fat Island is (ironically) a slim little platforming effort, taking place on five single-screen missions where the object is to stuff your face with food in various ways (your score is measured by your weight in kilograms). It's lots of frantic fun, and over in less than five minutes win or lose, but inexplicably is the only mode in the game not to store a high score, instantly destroying most of the point in a staggering outbreak of utter stupidity.

Storm The Mothership is more substantial and less interesting, casting you as one of General Morden's goons tasked with rescuing the evil warlord from the double-crossing aliens. You can play as one of three different soldiers (armed with either grenades, bazooka or shield and pistol), and lead a whole squad of CPU-controlled troopers in the attack on the alien base. Unfortunately, there are so many characters on screen that death is pretty arbitrary and it's rarely possible to see what killed you, and it's so hard to get into even the lowest reaches of the preset high-score table that the mode isn't nearly as much fun as it could have been.



» Maybe the worst Level 1 boss of all time.



» *MS4* tries to up the pace by giving you an almost non-stop barrage of vehicles to ride in for the first couple of levels, but soon reverts to a slow, painstaking slog.

2002
METAL SLUG 4 (ARCADE, NEO-GEO, PS2, XBOX)

By the time the fourth release in the main *Slug* line arrived, SNK had gone down the dumper and remained only as a brand name. Playmore handled the new release, and came up with a game that was a bit less tedious than its predecessor without being very different, save for a quickly abandoned medal-collecting sub-theme. Its main purpose was still to hoover continue-money out of arcadegoer's pockets, but it was slightly less bitterly unfair than *MS3*, as well as being shorter. (And smaller generally, with less branching and therefore less replay value, which would normally be a bad thing but isn't when you're using something as horrible as *Metal Slug 3* for your design foundation.)

Joy-sucking zombie sections were still everywhere, though, and to date *MS4* remains the most criticised game of the series. (This reporter has a theory about how popular reaction is always a game behind when it comes to long-running franchises – because when players buy something that got good reviews but turns out to be a bad game, they take their frustrations out on the next one in the series – but we don't really have the room to go into it.)

The home versions were punted out in a hurry at budget price, and have no extras whatsoever, not even Combat School.

2003
METAL SLUG 5 (ARCADE, NEO-GEO, PS2, XBOX, PC)

Having cut its teeth on *Metal Slug 4*, the following year's game saw Playmore get into its stride a bit. *Metal Slug 5* is a significantly better game – faster and leaner and fairer – but most importantly of all it's *completely zombie-free*! Yay! Apart from that long-overdue fix it's business as usual, so let's save ourselves some time.



» As with *Metal Slug 4*, the home versions of *MS5* were bargain-basement budget releases with no extras, so none are pictured in this screenshot.

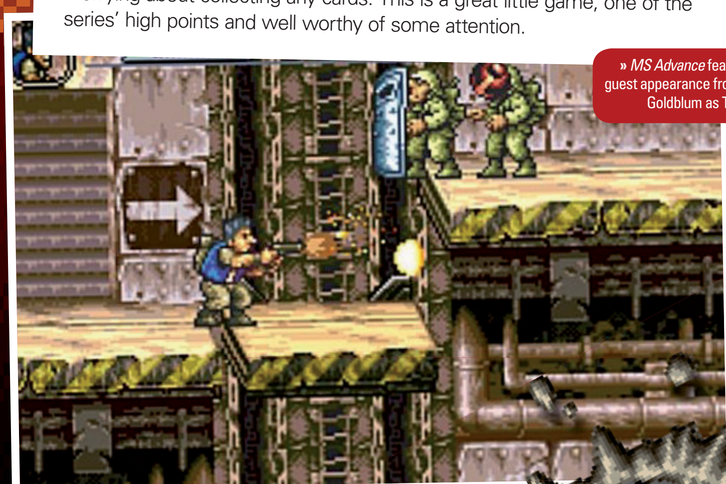


2004
METAL SLUG ADVANCE (GAME BOY ADVANCE)

In most respects, *Metal Slug Advance* is the most radical and inventive of all the *Slug* games. Designed very much with its target platform in mind, it's superficially similar to its predecessors but in fact has very different structure and goals. The most obvious deviations from the *Metal Slug* norm are both borrowed from the Neo-Geo Pocket games – that is, an energy bar instead of lives, and there's no scoring.

But, in fact, the underlying game mechanic of *Advance* is a lot closer to Pokémon than *Metal Slug* – rather than simply slaughtering your way to the end, the focus of *Metal Slug Advance* is on prisoner rescuing, and you'll have to play stages over and over again (you can select any one you've cleared) until you can get to the end of them without being killed, thereby saving any prisoners you freed on that particular runthrough and recording them in your Pokedex-style card album.

The ferocious difficulty, exacerbated by an irritatingly excessive amount of enemy respawning, will be an issue for a lot of players, but if you've got hardcore Slugging skillz you're going to love this. And if you're a cack-handed wuss you'll still have some fun just continuing your way to the end without worrying about collecting any cards. This is a great little game, one of the series' high points and well worthy of some attention.



» *MS Advance* features a guest appearance from Jeff Goldblum as The Fly.





» I like to think that that building actually is full of arms.



2006

METAL SLUG AKA METAL SLUG 3D (PLAYSTATION 2)

Here, on the other hand, is the black sheep of the family – a game just as different to the main *Slug* bloodline as *Advance* is, but for entirely different reasons. Completing some sort of ironic circle, the series that started out as a refreshing antidote to generic polygon games has now turned into one itself.

Metal Slug 3D is a respectable enough little game, and does a fair job of translating the trademark clear-small-sections-and-move-on *Metal Slug* gameplay from 2D into third-person 3D (including the reliance on making you shoot armoured vehicles hundreds of times with a uselessly weak handgun), but there are already a hundred PS2 games doing the same thing better than this by-the-numbers effort with its major camera issues and fiddly controls. It plays like an internal design experiment that didn't quite work, but that it figured it might as well sell anyway. You won't hate it if you buy it, but don't hold your breath for *Metal Slug 3D 2*.



» The new hardware allows *MS6* to throw lots of stuff at you at once without slowing to a crawl. Sadly, that rarely includes a decent gun.



2006

METAL SLUG 6 (ARCADE, PS2)

The sixth game in the series properly marked a considerable evolution. The near-20-year-old Neo-Geo hardware was finally dumped in favour of Sammy's Atomiswave platform, putting an end to slowdown issues, and the gameplay design also saw some significant changes. The six selectable characters now play differently (Fio, for example, gets more ammo for weapon pick-ups than the others, whereas Eri gets extra grenades), and there's a *Contra*-style double-weapon system, where you can switch between two different pick-ups or even stick with your crappy default pistol to conserve ammo until you need it. There's a new melee attack, a combo-power-up mechanic, and the gold coins first seen fleetingly in *Metal Slug 2* now form the heart of the scoring system.

With all that in place, *Metal Slug 6* initially looks like being a return to the all-action fun of the first game, with the expanded armoury doing away with the tiresome insistence of *Slugs 3* to *5* on keeping the player pitifully underpowered in the face of overwhelming assaults. Sadly, by halfway through Mission 2 that approach is back, and from Mission 3 onwards it's worse than it's ever been, leaving the poor player with a pathetic pop-gun with which to take down wave after wave of large, fast-moving and heavily armoured enemies crowding the screen and spewing out cascades of fire from point-blank range. (There's a half-hearted attempt at alleviating the misery by including an Easy mode, where you always have the heavy machine gun, but that only gets you past the first four levels.)

Metal Slug 6 is, in itself, a wholly wretched experience, but it did lay some important groundwork for the future, so hurry on.

2006

METAL SLUG ANTHOLOGY (Wii, PS2, PSP)

This compilation of all seven arcade *Slugs* (*1* to *6* plus *X*) seemed like manna from heaven for *Metal Slug* fans when it was announced, but, in fact, it's a massive and stupid missed opportunity. It's literally the arcade games, so you get none of the extras from any of the home ports. The one worthwhile addition is the inclusion of a rapid-fire mode (particularly welcome on PSP, because hammering repeatedly on fire buttons on a handheld is a recipe for motion sickness), but for some insane reason it's enabled on every game except *Metal Slug 6*.

Anthology's also variously afflicted with a cumbersome front end, heavy loading issues and bad Wii controls – the Wiimote being one short of the three fire buttons needed, and resorting to making you jerk it around for jumping – and is generally a waste of money on all formats, which is why it's such a fixture of game-store bargain bins.





» The game's only slight failing is that the backgrounds are less pretty than usual, but it's not much of a price to pay.



» *Metal Gear Anthology* seemed like just what fans of the series had been waiting for, but turned out to be a huge disappointment.

2008

METAL SLUG 7 (DS)

The latest Metal *Slug* is a sort of funny little hybrid. It takes everything that was good about *Metal Slug 6*, *Metal Slug Advance* and the PlayStation version of *Metal Slug X* and mixes them together to come up with the finest game in the history of the series. *Metal Slug 7* is a work of genius, built around the core of *MS6* (double weapons, combos, coins, six characters with different abilities), combining classic all-out *Slug* action and the best bits from the spin-offs, all inside a structure that's been perfectly designed for bite-sized chunks of home and handheld play.

MS7 is effectively three different types of *Slug* games in one. It's got *Advance*'s Pokémon-esque prisoner-collecting game, combined with traditional high-score tables for the main game (a separate one for each of three difficulty settings, all of which let you play all the stages), and rankings for the Combat School missions, which are now a blend of the old Combat Schools and *MSX*'s Another Mission, and number a whopping 80 in total.

Whether you just want to plough through to the end using lots of continues, get as far as you can on one credit, carefully explore for well-hidden prisoners or take on a bunch of mini-challenges, there's something different to do every time you load *Metal Slug 7* up. It's got weeks and weeks of replay value, even for hardcore *Slug* veterans. It strips the series down to its fundamental values, dumping all the rubbish, and then beefs the good bits all up to the max. After a decade of disappointments, it's almost as much of a breath of fresh air as the first game was all those years ago.

MOBILE METAL MADNESS

There's a whole other sub-thread of games based with varying degrees of faithfulness around the Neo-Geo Pocket releases and the arcade games (*Metal Slug Mobile Impact*, for example, mixes together tweaked versions of levels from *MS1* and *MS2*), but it's not something you need to worry about because – unsurprisingly – a game requiring such intricate and fast manoeuvring as *Metal Slug* does plays so amazingly badly on mobile phone controls that only a lunatic would even think about it.









SOMETHING OLD SOMETHING NEW



Game Title: Super Street Fighter II Turbo Remix HD
System: Xbox Live Arcade/PlayStation Network
Interviewee: Rey Jimenez

RETRO GAMER LOOKS BACK AT SOME OF THE CLASSIC FRANCHISES THAT ARE BEING REVIVED FOR NEXT-GEN SYSTEMS. CAPCOM'S 2D SUPER STREET FIGHTER II HD REMIX HAS JUST BEEN RELEASED FOR THE PLAYSTATION NETWORK. PRODUCER REY JIMENEZ EXPLAINS THE MAGIC BEHIND ITS CREATION

So why was *Super Street Fighter II Turbo* chosen?
Super Turbo was chosen because it has persevered so long. 14 years later and this version of *Street Fighter II* is still played in tournaments! I think it shows how great a game it is. Also, I think most gamers (old and new), can identify and have fond memories of the *SFII* games. If we were going to pick any of the many iterations of *SFII*, we decided on what many consider to be the best one.

The game was originally due for release at the end of last year, why has it taken so long to arrive?
There were a number of setbacks, but the art creation definitely was the biggest one. We essentially… had to start from the beginning. What we started with was basically just not going to do the *Street Fighter* franchise justice and felt that it would be better to start over rather than release a game that didn't look its best.

In the end, this delay also helped the project because we ended up being able to add more to the game, like a tournament mode and a more refined Remixed mode.

You've been open on your forums about the game's creation. Do you think this has worked in your favour with the fans?
It was definitely interesting to say the least. While it's always great to hear from the fans on what they think, sometimes it can be a bit time-consuming filtering out the useful comments. *SFHD* had a lot of fan interaction, but it would be really cool to work on a game from the ground up where its whole conception and development is something done with fan participation.

Were you not tempted to redo the animation in order to match *SFHD*'s fantastic visuals?
Absolutely not! Many fans have asked why the animation was not redone, meaning, why didn't we add more frames. One of the main reasons is that if we added frames of animation, what makes the gameplay of *Super Turbo* so unique would totally change. Part of the reason *SFII* feels like *SFII* and no other game does is the timing of all the moves and frames. Adding any frames of animation will change all that and the goal was to bring *Super Turbo* to the present, not totally change it.

The second, and probably more limiting reason, is that it's technically not possible. Minus the tweaks we put into the Remixed mode, we're basically using the same code as the original game. This doesn't allow the changing of the art callouts to include frames that weren't there before.

> **"Super Turbo was chosen because it has persevered so long"**
> REY JIMENEZ

How difficult was it mapping Udon's sensational-looking art over the original sprites?
It actually wasn't a challenge at all. Some modification was needed on certain sprites to make sure that the new art would fit within the space of the old art, but it didn't turn out to be as difficult as we thought it might be.

Who's your favourite character in the game and why?
From the *Street Fighter II* series, I would have to say Guile. The guy's an Air Force Colonel and doesn't care what anyone says about his hair. Or at least, no one has the guts to tell him anything about it. Someone that badass just has to be cool.

The remixed music is excellent, how long did it take to create?
One of the great parts about that is that the OC ReMix guys had already done about 40 per cent of the work already. Many of the tracks that we used they had already created as a personal project a few years ago, which is one of the things that attracted us to them. They needed some tweaking to be game ready, but the tracks were there already. The other 60 per cent I would say took about another six months to create.

The net code for *HD Remix* is excellent with very little lag, was this easy to achieve?
Not easy at all. We were working with newly created tech and it's taken a lot of work to get it to where it is now. The beta test that we did helped out immensely. There was a critical bug in the first version that we ended up patching, but this bug never showed up in our testing. It was just one of those bugs that will only show up in the 'real' world with tons of people playing, something we cannot simulate in a testing environment.

Playing *HD Remix* online is like being back in the arcades during the Nineties. Was this your intention?
Online play was one of the main features because we specifically wanted to bring back that arcade feeling. It's something that's lost now, but if we could pull off a good online experience, we knew that we would be bringing some of that magic back to a new generation of gamers.

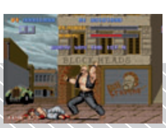
Why do you think the *Street Fighter* series of games remain so popular?
As a fighting game, I think *Street Fighter* still remains because of its gameplay and its characters. Even though other fighting games use similar execution of moves, they still didn't capture the gameplay that *Street Fighter* had. It's a very esoteric and intangible item and shows how genius the original designers were in making *Street Fighter*.

The other factor is the characters. Look how many people love and know the characters despite not being good at the game. Each character fills an archetype role in the series and their design is simple yet effective. Like the gameplay, there's a very intangible quality of why characters like Ryu are so penetrating, despite simply being a man in a gi.

How would you ideally like *Street Fighter HD Remix* to be remembered?
Simply as a worthy addition to the pantheon of *SFII* games. Graphics get better every day, but it's gameplay that perseveres. If fans are still playing *HD Remix* as much as they're playing any of the other *SFII* games in the years to come, then we've done our job.



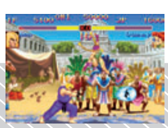
Selected Street Fighter Timeline



STREET FIGHTER
Year Released: 1987



STREET FIGHTER II: THE WORLD WARRIOR
Year Released: 1992



SUPER STREET FIGHTER II: THE NEW CHALLENGERS
Year Released: 1993



SUPER STREET FIGHTER II TURBO
Year Released: 1994



STREET FIGHTER ALPHA: WARRIORS' DREAMS
Year Released: 1995



STREET FIGHTER ALPHA II
Year Released: 1996

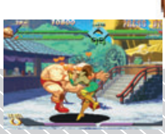


STREET FIGHTER EX
Year Released: 1996



» Black and white sketches of Udon's excellent art. Note the dynamic pose of Akuma and how cool Guile looks.

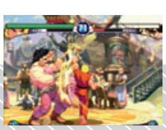
» An early test palette for Ryu – scars and muscle tone are visible and he looks far scarier than his original incarnation.



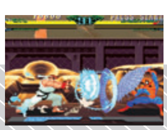
X-MEN VS STREET FIGHTER
Year Released: 1996



STREET FIGHTER III: NEW GENERATION
Year Released: 1997



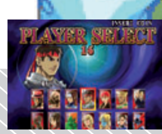
STREET FIGHTER III: 2ND IMPACT – GIANT ATTACK
Year Released: 1997



MARVEL SUPER HEROES VS STREET FIGHTER
Year Released: 1997



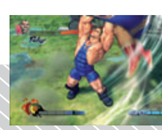
STREET FIGHTER ALPHA III
Year Released: 1998



STREET FIGHTER EX2
Year Released: 1998



STREET FIGHTER III: 3RD STRIKE
Year Released: 1999

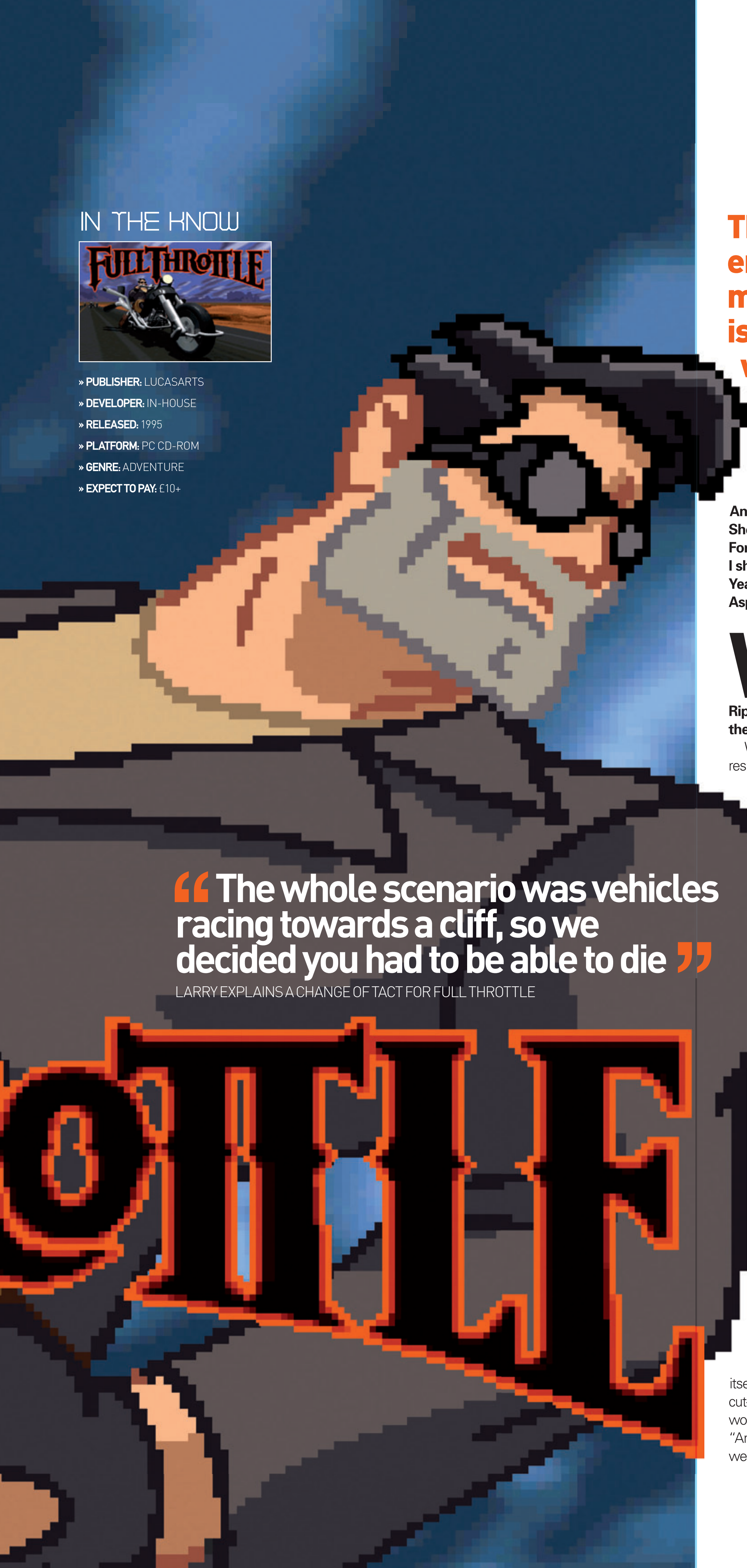


STREET FIGHTER IV
Year Released: 2008

THE MAKING OF...



FULLTHR



IN THE KNOW

» **PUBLISHER:** LUCASARTS
» **DEVELOPER:** IN-HOUSE
» **RELEASED:** 1995
» **PLATFORM:** PC CD-ROM
» **GENRE:** ADVENTURE
» **EXPECT TO PAY:** £10+

The smell of diesel and engine vibrations can only mean one thing: Ben Throttle is in town. Kim Wild talks with animator Larry Ahern about Full Throttle…

"Whenever I smell asphalt I think of Maureen.
That's the last sensation I had, before I blacked out: the thick smell of asphalt.
And the first thing I saw when I woke up was her face.
She said she'd fix my bike.
For Free. No strings attached.
I should have known then that things are never that simple.
Yeah, when I think of Maureen I think of two things.
Asphalt and trouble."

With these opening words, the scene is set. After an introductory movie plus some headbanging to one of The Gone Jackals' numbers, it's time to get on your bike and help Ben take on Adrian Ripburger, who is out to destroy Malcolm Corley and is setting the Polecats up for a fall.

While it was Tim Schafer that came up with the idea and was responsible for the project's writing and gameplay design ("at one point Tim mentioned hearing about someone's motorcycle trip and thinking that was a good subject for a game. Or maybe he got framed for murder"), Larry Ahern and Peter Chan led the art team that would conjure up the visuals, including the characters, vehicles, backgrounds and animations. "I also worked with project leader Tim Schafer in the early story/design brainstorm sessions, once his initial concept proposal had been approved," remembers lead animator Larry Ahern. "These were the sessions where we fleshed out the storyline, and tried to take all our awesome action and sci-fi biker ideas and shoehorn them into some kind of puzzle structure that would also forward the narrative. On *Full Throttle*, we looked at comic books, and were going for a very graphic novel look combined with a cinematic style. You can see touches of Mike Mignola in there, along with some anime stuff like *Akira*."

> "The whole scenario was vehicles racing towards a cliff, so we decided you had to be able to die"
>
> LARRY EXPLAINS A CHANGE OF TACT FOR FULL THROTTLE

Larry's designs for the characters turned out to be experimental. "I'm sure there's a better method," he explains, "but my process usually involves digging up some inspirational art and photo reference, over-thinking it too much, doing 100 variations of the main characters, having a near aneurysm while trying to capture some elusive element, then realising that the second sketch I did is really what I was looking for." The creation of Maureen has a more personal note. "I remember that I designed Maureen to look a bit like my girlfriend at the time. Except I changed her long blonde hair to brown, and we made her a chopper-riding mechanic, instead of a bank teller. Right after I finalised the design, my girlfriend dumped me, and I was forced to spend the rest of the production looking at her face. The rest of the character designs were pulled out of my imagination, which is a lot less heart-wrenching and I recommend this approach instead."

While character design took experimentation, the animation itself was something of a learning curve. With close-ups, numerous cut-scenes and interactive segments, it can't be denied that a lot of work went into making the game as close to a movie as possible. "Animation was a big step for us, since it was the first game where we really pushed the cinematic feel, and were using storyboards,

"I designed it. Well, a version of it that never got off the drawing board"

LARRY AHERN TALKS ABOUT THE FULL THROTTLE SEQUEL THAT NEVER WAS

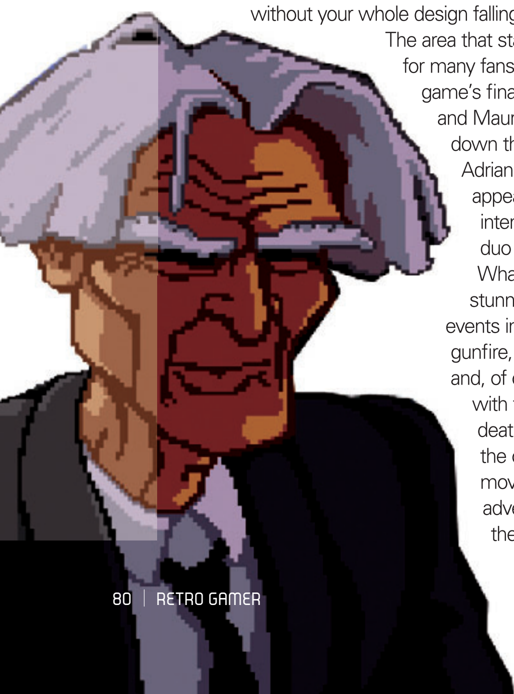
animations, and lots of things that were pretty new to us. We also did some larger 2D animations on paper and scanned them in, added a shadow colour to the characters to emphasise the noir lighting, and incorporated 3D for all of the vehicles. Using 3D meant we could animate very complex motorcycles in a shorter amount of time, and were able to blend them with the game's style by rendering the bikes in very flat colours and then rotoscoping 2D riders on top of 3D dummy characters."

Aside from its cinematic qualities, *Full Throttle* stood out for blending together a mixture of adventure elements with action segments. A significant portion is dedicated to *Road Rash*-esque biking (see the 'Burning Rubber' boxout), while other sequences – including controlling a crane and taking part in a demolition derby – make up the rest of the action. Combined with the puzzle-solving elements, *Full Throttle*'s action sequences provided variety but weren't always well executed. Larry explains that this approach fitted perfectly with the style of the game environment. "We didn't think it would fly if we told players they were a badass biker," he explains, "and then made them sit back and watch every time Ben did a cool motorcycle stunt, and then gave them back the cursor when it was time for him to run errands. With *Full Throttle*, I think the combination made a lot of sense, but I think the implementation just didn't live up to the idea."

The point-and-click interface also received something of a revamp, taking the form of a biker-style tattoo over simple text commands. "We initially did a very simple translucent wheel," remembers Larry. "The thought was that it would be smaller than the old user interface, and then when it was on screen, you could see through it. But it ended up looking too modern. So, I suggested if we couldn't make it invisible, then we should theme it to the game. At least that's how I remember it, which quite possibly means that someone else came up with the idea and I wholeheartedly agreed with it, thereby claiming the idea as my own."

At around four hours duration, *Full Throttle* was a short game, a point that many critics picked up on at the time. Yet this was never meant to be the case, merely a result of budget restrictions due to the huge amount of animation involved. "We cut a huge section of the game that centred on Ricky Myron's stunt show, and I think a few other puzzles around the Mink Ranch. We hated to lose it, and ideally wanted to cut something about half that size, but everything else was so critical to the story that Ricky was the only thing we could lose without a major redesign. All the puzzles are tightly integrated within the storyline, so it's not like you can do a story rewrite later without your whole design falling apart."

The area that stands out the most for many fans of *Full Throttle* is the game's final confrontation. Ben and Maureen are speeding down the highway when Adrian Ripburger suddenly appears with his truck, intent on ramming the duo into the canyon. What follows is a stunning sequence of events involving fisticuffs, gunfire, a runway hangar and, of course, explosions, with the possibility of death lurking just around the corner: a rare move for a LucasArts adventure. "We decided there was no way to get the adrenalin-pumping ending that our story needed unless the finale was cranked up and flying by at full speed," explains Larry. "We decided that you had to be able to die; only we weren't going to penalise you for it. We just bounced you back to the last spot you were struggling with before your sorry butt did a nosedive into the canyon. That way we managed to get excitement and the risk of carnage, but no unhappy players! I actually think that part turned out really well, and it was a bit of a twist from our usual adventure game finale structure. Plus, I'm really proud of all the crazy action stunts we came up with for that section."



Despite its shortcomings, *Full Throttle* was, and still is, a thrilling ride from start to finish, combining a tightly implemented storyline with cinematic visuals that made it stand apart from all other titles. Given the chance, Larry would have liked to have polished a few areas. "I wish we had at least 640 x 480 resolution, since that seems to be the threshold for real art versus pixelated old-school style. And, I wish we had some higher production values on some of the animation. Then there are a few puzzle sections that are kind of weak, or just should have more depth. But, overall I still like it."

It would be some years before a sequel would come to light, yet when it did so, only a rough preview version emerged. After this point, LucasArts went quiet on the matter, only to cancel the project in 2003 to avoid fan disappointment. When asked about his involvement, Larry admits that he was initially linked with the sequel. "I designed it. Well, a version of it that never got off the drawing board before I quit and the bloody remains of it were handed over to another team. But, the environment was very different at the company by that point. LucasArts was struggling through a painful transition, trying to reinvent itself, trying to push away from the adventure game roots, but it wasn't working too well. Meanwhile, we were haemorrhaging talented staff, and had gone through a few changes in management. In the end, things were going nowhere on the game, so I left."

The decision to cancel such a high-profile release confused the adventure game community, leaving many wondering just what might have been. On that note, Larry decides to share some of his sequel ideas with us. "The villain was a Senator with an anti-biker agenda, pushing to replace the worn-out highways with new, biker-unfriendly hover lanes. The game also featured Ben's estranged weasel-of-a-brother, who was mixed up in one of the Senator's shady operations, and a more central role for Father Torque. Maureen had a cameo, but the female lead was a reporter who covers Ben after his subsequent fame for the alleged murder of Malcolm Corley. We had some fun new biker gangs also, like the Dragons, who sported flame-throwers on the handlebars of their bikes, and the Leeches, a gang in rocket-powered side-cars that cruise the highways jumping from vehicle to vehicle and attaching to them to syphon fuel."

Regarding whether or not he would be interested in revisiting *Full Throttle*, Larry is understandably reluctant. "I obviously have a story and design that I wanted to make. But, LucasArts doesn't seem to be the best environment these days for building a property like *Full Throttle*. At this point, I would just as soon work on some original ideas that don't have so much legal baggage."

While Ben's biking days seem to be over, Larry's journey is still ongoing. Crackpot Entertainment is a development company formed by Michael Levine, with Larry taking the position of creative director. Staffed with former LucasArts team members among others, the company's first release was the point-and-click adventure/action title *Insecticide* on PC and Nintendo DS. Those interested can find out more information from www.insecticidethegame.com.

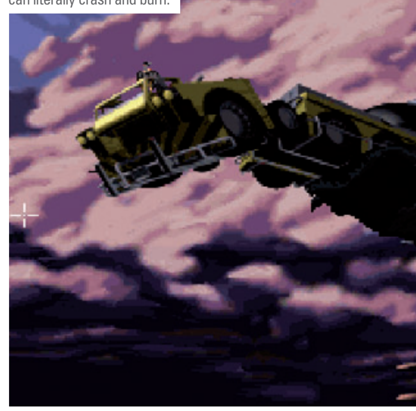
It is only fitting then that as Ben rides off into the sunset that Larry puts into words just what makes *Full Throttle* so fondly remembered. "Motorcycles, rock 'n' roll and bunnies." Who could possibly forget about the bunnies?

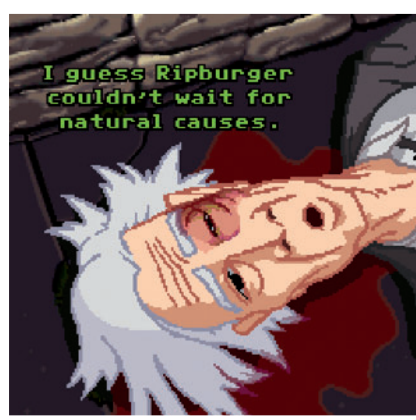


» Ben, the star of the show and leader of the Polecats.



» A cliffhanger where you can literally crash and burn.







» Ben's stretching exercises are taken to the next level.



DEVELOPER HIGHLIGHTS

THE CURSE OF MONKEY ISLAND
SYSTEM: PC
YEAR: 1997

DAY OF THE TENTACLE
SYSTEM: PC
YEAR: 1993

THE SECRET OF MONKEY ISLAND
SYSTEMS: AMIGA, PC, FM TOWNS, ATARI ST, MAC, CD TV, SEGA CD
YEAR: 1990









» Big explosions are a common occurrence in *Full Throttle*.

Burning Rubber

Anyone who has played a certain motorcycle title will have noticed how similar the biking sections are to the ones featured so prominently in *Full Throttle*. As it turns out, you'd be correct. "The idea came from *Road Rash*," admits Larry Ahern. "We had Vince Lee's INSANE video streaming engine integrated into SCUMM, so that was the foundation of it. We were able to play a movie of a 3D version of the environment whizzing by and then put some biker sprites on top." Although enjoyable in small doses, these action segments weren't as well implemented as they could have been and struggled with the mouse and keyboard control system. "It seemed like all the action sequences were a pain," explains Larry, "and didn't turn out as good as we'd hoped. So, I'm going to say it was difficult. Final answer. (Disclaimer: the above explanation was given by an art guy)."





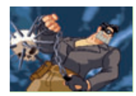


» Ripburger's plans aren't quite what Corley had in mind.





The Cast



BEN
Leader of the Polecats and nice guy.



MAUREEN
Bike mechanic with a secret, who helps Ben.



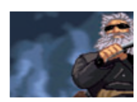
MALCOLM CORLEY
Founder of Corley Motors.



MIRANDA
An inquisitive news reporter.



ADRIAN RIPBURGER
The villain. He hates bikers.



FATHER TORQUE
Ex-leader of the Polecats.



NESTOR AND BOLUS
Two of Ripburger's thugs.



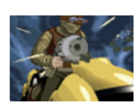
POLECATS
Ben's biker gang members.



VULTURES
Rival gang led by Maureen's friend Suzi.



ROTTWHEELERS
Another biker gang on the lookout for trouble.



CAVEFISH
Strange gang who are sensitive to light.

CLASSIC GAMING ON A BUDGET

CHEAP AS CHIPS



If there's one thing we've learned about retro gaming, it's that your money can stretch an amazingly long way if you actually want it to. Granted, a mint copy of *Radiant Silvergun* is going to cost you a small fortune, but there are plenty of other worthy titles that can picked up for less than a fiver…

CONFIDENTIAL MISSION

- » **SYSTEM:** DREAMCAST
- » **RELEASED:** 2001
- » **PUBLISHER:** SEGA
- » **DEVELOPER:** HITMAKER



Released late into that second arcade boom, *Confidential Mission* was a light gun game by Hitmaker (AM3) that starred two secret agent types who looked like secondary school teachers. Curiously, while this action-packed gun game followed the release of two hugely popular *House Of The Dead* games, *Confidential Mission* action played out more like a spin-off to Sega's inaugural 3D shooter, *Virtua Cop*, with many fans actually seeing it as a bit of a soft spy sequel.

The game's story finds you playing the role of two spies who are trying to recover a stolen satellite from an eye-patched terrorist. This techno pirate is hoping he can use the giant dish for a spot of world domination, and it falls to you to try and stop him by shooting dead a bunch of gawky looking enemies across three action-packed missions. Like typical gun games, *Confidential Mission* throws-up offers of plenty enemy fodder, including enemy agents, security guards and armed terrorists to rub your crosshairs against, and like *Virtua Cop*, the game helps you prioritise your attacks through giant luminous targets that change from warning green to 'this guy is about to pull the trigger' red whenever threats are close.



» A rare shot of gameplay footage taken from the cancelled Phonejacker arcade game.

While progression through the game is linear, *Confidential Mission* does introduce a unique slant on the time honoured tradition of incorporating forking levels to help eke a bit of replay from the game. But instead of opening up a new crossroad on the screen by saving a few innocents with covering fire, or shooting trigger-points to open a new waypoint on the screen, the game makes use of brilliant tin-can alley-style mini games to access new (and noticeably less frantic) directions through the game. Examples include trying to frantically block air vents that are slowly leaking poisonous gas into the lift you're in, and shooting away train couplings to escape a carriage of angry looking terrorists.

Like typical Sega arcade games, the cut scenes and dialogue in the game feel like watching a village hall theatre group perform in a big budget Hollywood blockbuster. But in *Confidential Mission* that Sega corniness actually feels purposeful. Its cheesiness lends brilliantly to the goofy spy theme of the game, and Sega keeps this keen sense of fun and humour throughout the game.

While *Confidential Mission* can't really be seen to be doing anything particularly inventive with the genre, there's no doubt that it's still a wonderfully polished game, and one that's actually surprisingly addictive. And while it may not have garnered the same level of success or acclaim as other light gun games of its time, nevertheless it still became another brilliant arcade conversion for the Dreamcast.

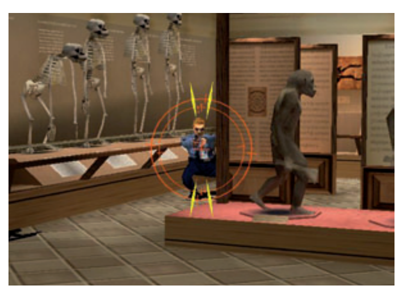
With just three stages, the game is admittedly a tad short, but the Dreamcast-exclusive *Agent Academy* mini games, on completion, add a neat game mode that mixes up the enemy attack patterns. The game's so enjoyable there's no doubt you will go back to it time and time again. For the equivalent of a few credits on the arcade game, there's nothing to stop you treating your Dreamcast to this unappreciated spy classic.



» *Confidential Mission* even carries over *Virtua Cop's* Justice Shot, which is awarded for disarming enemies rather than blowing them to pieces.



» No Sega gun game would be complete without a large quota of suicidal white-lab-coat wearing idiots to try and avoid.



» Like *Virtua Cop*, the game helps you prioritise your bullets via an idiot-proof flashing red crosshairs system.



FROM THE ARCHIVES

RETRO GAMER DIGS UP THE FILES OF THE CLASSIC COMPANIES OF OLD

DMA Design

It created some of the most innovative games of the Nineties, ranging from Lemmings to Grand Theft Auto. Darran Jones speaks to the geniuses behind DMA Design to find out more

Should you care to, it's possible to trace the history of *Lemmings* and *Grand Theft Auto* all the way back to 1983, when a small group of friends would regularly meet up at the Kingsway Amateur Computer Club at Dundee's Kingsway Technical College.

"I used to live around the corner from Dave Jones when I was at school and when we went to the Kingsway Amateur Computer Club he would give me a lift because he was older," recalls Russell Kay, one of DMA Design's original co-founders. "We both had this passion for writing code and games, which fitted well with what we wanted to do. Dave had been approached to write a Spectrum game but did not want to do it himself, so roped me in to help him. He then bought an Amiga and decided that the Spectrum was not for him, so I ended up doing the rest of the game, everything else just followed from there."

By the time that 14-year-old Mike Dailly arrived at the computer club in 1984, Dave, Steve Hammond and Russell had already been there for a good year, where they would play the latest games and discuss their love of programming. They would regularly haunt the local arcade, which in turn inspired the creation of their first game, *Menace* for the Amiga 500.

"We were all shoot-'em-up fans," laughs Mike, when we asked him what games they used to enjoy playing during those early beginnings. "We used to play games like *Alien Syndrome* with two or three of us all playing at once. I actually suspect we spent longer playing games at the arcade than on our own machines."

It was during these meet-ups at the KACC that Dave, the eldest in the group, revealed that he had left Timex and had used his redundancy money to treat himself to an Amiga 1000, a godlike machine to everyone else who was still playing and programming on their ZX Spectrums and Commodore 64s. While the friends would all get together to show off the latest programs they had been working on, it was always Dave and his Amiga that drew the most attention.

Time passed, college was attended and everyone began working on their own projects, some of which – Russell's *Zone Trooper* and Mike's *Freek Out* – would eventually get published. Dave's Amiga project *CopperCon-1*, which had been inspired by his love of Konami's shoot-'em-up *Salamander*, was coming along nicely during this time, and he began looking for a potential publisher. Although Hewson and Andrew Braybrook initially showed a great deal of interest in the project, they wanted it to become the official Amiga version of their hit 8-bit shooter *Zynaps*, but Dave wasn't happy and looked elsewhere.

The Psygnosis Era

That elsewhere turned out to be a Liverpudlian publisher named Psygnosis, and a deal was quickly struck. With an agreement in place and a game to be finished, it was time to think of a name for the budding team of developers/friends that was quickly amassing. As Dave's original choice of Acme was already taken, and he didn't like proposals like Alias Smith And Jones and Visual Voyage, everyone eventually settled on DMA Design,

INSTANT EXPERT

DMA Design was formed in 1989 by Dave Jones, Mike Dailly, Russell Kay, Steve Hammond and Brian Watson.

DMA stands for Direct Memory Access, although Dave Jones would often joke that is stood for Doesn't Mean Anything.

The first game DMA released, *Menace*, was originally known as *CopperCon-1* while Dave was coding it.

Lemmings became a huge hit for DMA and was eventually ported to over 20 different machines, including the Mega Drive, Atari Lynx and ZX Spectrum.

Body Harvest was an exclusive game for the N64 that was meant to be a launch title. Numerous delays saw it getting released three years later than planned.

DMA was sold to Gremlin Interactive in 1997. By then the only founders left at the company were Dave Jones, Mike Dailly and Steve Hammond.

Dave Jones was the only member of the original DMA team who was involved with *Grand Theft Auto III*.

Cancelled games that DMA was involved with included a Saturn version of *GTA*, *Clan Wars* and the *Golden Axe*-inspired *Gore*.

Less than half of the original DMA team are now hard at work at Realtime Worlds. They are currently working on *A.P.B.*.

LEMMINGS





which stood for Direct Memory Access and not Doesn't Mean Anything as Dave would jokingly tell journalists of the time.

"The forming of DMA just seemed to happen," recalls Brian Watson, who was a university pal of Dave's and was originally hired to do Atari ST conversions of *Menace* and *Lemmings*. "It just made sense with the progression that Dave was making. He had a game, he had people to work with (who didn't need the income as a primary source of finance), it was pretty much obvious that this would eventually happen. The level of risk involved in starting up a small development company, at that time, was very low; much different to how it is nowadays."

Mike Dailly recalls DMA's founding with equally fond memories. "I had just been thrown out of college and didn't know what I was going be doing, and then all of a sudden I get handed my dream job!" he remembers. "My mother thought I was crazy and wasting my time since it was a bedroom industry at that time, but I just didn't care, I was a real developer and was even getting paid."

While it lacked the innovative level and weapon design that so many Japanese shoot-'em-ups at the time possessed, *Menace* (which at one stage was called *Draconia*) nevertheless gained decent, if not stellar, reviews from most of the gaming press of the time. And, more importantly, gave Dave the collateral to properly set up DMA.

"One thing that Dave always tried to do was to not borrow money from people as the company grew," recalls Brian. "*Menace* took care of things originally, and then for a good deal of time after we got our new offices we still didn't need to borrow (thanks to *Lemmings*). I'm not sure what happened later on, but the way it progressed at the time seemed like a very safe way to go."

> **"There was this fantastic 'try it out and see' attitude to project development"** GARY TIMMONS ON DMA

The early days, as they are for any newly set-up business were difficult, and the team found itself torn between porting Psyclapse's *Ballistix* to various home systems and working on their second original game, another shooter, this time called *Blood Money*. Despite the difficulties involved for such a fledgling team of developers, Gary Timmons, who joined shortly after work was finishing on *Blood Money*, loved those early days.

"I just really enjoyed the atmosphere there," he recalls. "There was this fantastic 'try it out and see' attitude to project development – I think it would be hard to start up a company in the games industry today working the way we did back then – so I was glad to get the chance at the time. Doing original products was also refreshing."



Let's Go

While both *Menace* and *Blood Money* were perfectly competent blasters, it wasn't until 1991 and the release of a certain game called *Lemmings* that DMA Design was finally catapulted into the big time. *Menace* had sold a grand total of 20,000 units during its life span for the Amiga, while *Blood Money* had achieved 40,000 units. Both impressive figures, particularly when you consider how rife piracy was on the Amiga during those days. *Lemmings*, on the other hand, managed to sell 55,000 units on its first day of sale. DMA Design had arrived and Psygnosis was eager to cash in on the success of its new gaming phenomenon.

Wildly inventive, and eventually ported to practically every popular system at the time, *Lemmings* proved that DMA had a knack for delivering clever game ideas and, while several sequels and add-ons inevitably ▶

BY THE NUMBERS

- **1** The number of disks *Menace* came on.
- **3** The number of years *Body Harvest* was in development for.
- **4** The number of players who could participate in *Hired Guns*.
- **6** The number of *Lemmings* games made by DMA.
- **20** Million units of *Lemmings* games were sold in total.
- **85** The overall percentage *Walker* scored in *Amiga Power*.
- **94** The overall percentage *Blood Money* received in *Zzap!64*.
- **1991** The year the original *Lemmings* was released.
- **2000** The year Dave left DMA.



[CPC 464] *Moonshadow* was Russell Kay's first published game, but it was eventually renamed *Zone Trooper.*



[Amiga] DMA's first game was originally going to be called *Draconia*, but had to have its name changed at the last minute.



[N64] It may have arrived three years late, but *Body Harvest* remains an excellent game.

followed, the Dundee-based studio continued to deliver fascinating content, although not all of it eventually made it to store shelves…

Indeed, during 1990, while Russell Kay was still working on *Lemmings* and Dave had decided that it wasn't currently possible to achieve what he wanted to do on what would later become *Walker*, DMA Design was also working on *Gore* and *Cutiepoo*. The first game was a blood-soaked re-imagination of *Golden Axe* – one of Dave's favourite games at the time – the latter, a cute platformer whose characters had been designed by Gary. Unfortunately, the two titles faced various problems.

"The idea was basically to make *Golden Axe* on steroids," explains Mike when we asked him about the exciting-sounding *Gore*. "It had huge characters/baddies on a three-layer parallax playfield hacking away with loads of blood everywhere. Dave worked on this after playing with an initial version of *Walker* (based on the walkers from *Blood Money*). It was progressing slowly and I even started a version of it after finishing *Ballistix* on the C64, but 1MB Amigas just weren't common back then and memory was simply too tight so it was 'temporarily shelved'. *Cutiepoo*, on the other hand, came about due to several Disney-styled animations of a character that Gary Timmons had created. Dave thought it was too good not to use, but there were several complications for the project, the first of which was that Gary wasn't used to games and had done the animations in a very unfriendly 24 frames per second, and a 24-pixel walk cycle. This caused huge issues within the code, but the real problem was that Tony (the freelance coder that had been hired to write it) just didn't make enough progress. This went on for about a year (at a time when games usually took about six to nine months to write), and so it too was 'temporarily shelved'."

> **"The moment I saw the test demo I knew that it was going to be good"** BRIAN WATSON ON LEMMINGS



DMA's very first offices. They were over the road from Dave Jones's father-in-law's fish-and-chip restaurant, The Deep Sea. Needless to say, lunchtimes were sorted.

It was also during this time that Dave decided that he wanted to try something a little different, and while he worked on and off on *Gore*, he looked at ways of creating an Action Replay cartridge for the Amiga. While the devices were already available on the C64, nothing had been released on Commodore's 16-bit machine, so Dave set to work on the 'Monster Cartridge', as he liked to call it. Sadly, he was beaten to the punch by another developer and it never came to be.

"The Monster Cartridge made me laugh," recalls Gary. "Poor Dave had these massive ideas and plans and put all this work into it but it never became the wonder product he had originally planned."

Unsurprisingly, due to the massive success of *Lemmings*, Psygnosis pushed DMA into creating several sequels and add-ons, ranging from *Oh No! More Lemmings* towards the end of 1991 (the same year *Lemmings*

WHERE ARE THEY NOW?

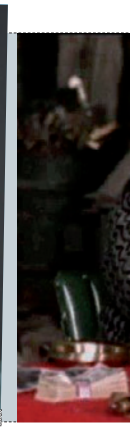
Like many British developers, the original team of founders didn't stay at the company forever. Mike Dailly left DMA in 1999, two months short of a decade of service, while Russell Kay left in 1993. Brian Watson departed the company around 1995, then Steve Hammond was next, leaving in 1997. Gary Timmons and Dave Jones both stayed until 2000, when Dave set up a new company that eventually became Realtime Worlds.

Apart from Steve Hammond, everyone from those early days of DMA remain in the game industry. Steve is now working at a company called Gore-Tex who specialise in producing electronic interconnects. Brian Watson has moved overseas to the United States and works on the PlayStation 3 for Sony R&D, while Gary Timmons currently resides at games developer Denki.

Mike Dailly, Russell Kay (who originally left DMA to found Visual Sciences) and Dave Jones, on the other hand, can all be found at Realtime Worlds. The company's first game, *Crackdown*, was released in 2007 and turned out to be a refreshingly clever spin on the sandbox genre that *GTA* had popularised. The studio's next title, *A.P.B.* currently has no release date, but is being developed for the PC and 360.









SIX OF THE BEST

Lemmings
While lemmings don't really hurl themselves off cliffs, they nevertheless made for a great game concept that still holds up today. Having to save the little critters from all sorts of doom made for a thoroughly entertaining gaming experience. Add in some devious puzzles and cute animation and its little surprise that the series became so successful.



Grand Theft Auto
Astonishing in both design and concept, it's a testament to Dave Jones and the rest of the DMA team that *Grand Theft Auto* still looks so good today. The slick overhead action, the feeling of freedom and the wanton violence all helped turn *GTA* into a worldwide gaming phenomenon. It's a humbling experience to return to where it all began.



Unirally
What do you get when you cross a unicycle with a multicoloured racetrack? The greatest multiplayer racing game the SNES had seen since *Super Mario Kart*. It may not look like much, but *Unirally*'s ridiculously hectic pace and competitive play more than makes up for its simplistic-looking aesthetics. Find seven friends, grab some beers and play till the sun comes up.



Body Harvest
It may have suffered lengthy delays and a bad case of fogitis, but *Body Harvest* was well worth the wait. Huge in size – spanning five time periods – and featuring more than 60 different vehicles, it's an absolutely mammoth game that, while rather ugly by today's standards, still has tremendous gameplay and atmosphere. A definite classic that needs to be played.

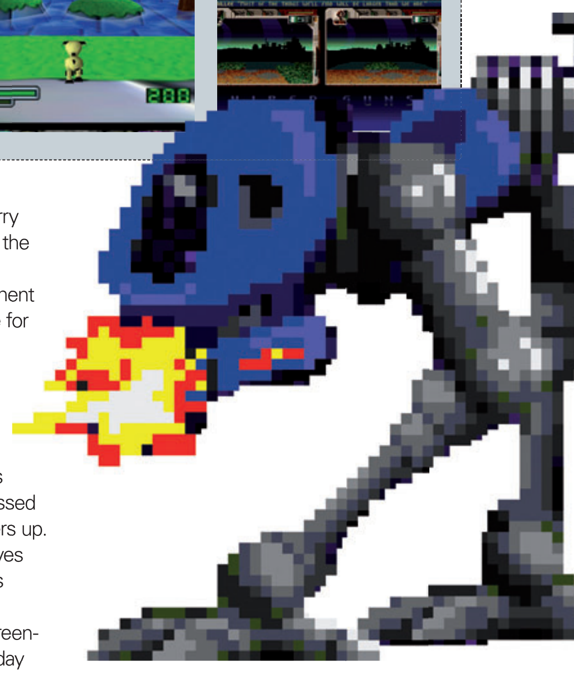


Space Station Silicon Valley
If you need further proof of the ideas coming out of DMA then check out *Space Station Silicon Valley*. It's a great adventure game that sees you solving puzzles by jumping in and out of robotic animals. It is a clever juxtaposition of hilarious visuals and devious gameplay and is one of the Nintendo 64's most original games.



Hired Guns
Trust DMA to put a spin on what was becoming a conventional staple of the Western RPG. While *Hired Guns* wasn't the first role-playing game to allow you to send a group of four adventurers on a quest, it was the first to let four players adventure simultaneously on one machine. Yes, it was resource hungry, but the resulting experience more than made up for it.





had been released) to *All New World Of Lemmings* in 1995. While the numerous add-ons, including some quaint festive editions that saw the little critters dressed up as Santa Claus were little more than level packs, it was *Lemmings 2: The Tribes* that allowed the little buggers to really show off their talents. Now split into 12 different groups, the action took place over larger levels and featured multiple drop points for the Lemmings, who also had a variety of new abilities, ranging from jumping to hang-gliding to even turning into a Super Lemming. *The Tribes* was critically received by reviewers and was ported over to many machines, although nowhere near as many as the 1991 original.

By 1995, however, it was starting to become clear that interest in *Lemmings*, both from DMA and the general public, was starting to wane, with *All New World Of Lemmings* failing to attain the same success as its predecessors. Psygnosis still felt there was plenty of interest in the franchise, hiring other developers to work on new games and spin-offs – such as *3D Lemmings*, *Lemmings Paintball* and *The Adventures Of Lomax* – often to mixed results. Even now the furry critters are starring in their own game on the PlayStation 3 (by Team 17) and while the original team no longer have any involvement with the franchise, they still hold a candle for the 1991 original.

"It was a simple, straightforward idea that was very frustrating to play but had instant gratification once you'd finally completed a level," explains Brian. "It also boasted great replay value and hours and hours of gameplay. And if you got pissed off with it, you got to blow the little f**kers up. Very satisfying. The moment I first set eyes on the initial test demo I knew that it was going to be good."

Russell has similar memories of the green-haired critters. "I remember taking a holiday in America just after *Lemmings* had been released and it was great walking into all the shops over there and seeing our game on the shelves, this little thing that we had made was everywhere… in short it felt fantastic."

Although the first half of the Nineties saw DMA releasing a fair amount of *Lemmings* games, it still found time to create original ideas, with *Walker* – which had been around in one form or another since 1989 – appearing in 1993, despite being the original inspiration for *Lemmings*, along with the excellent *Hired Guns* and *Unirally* (or *Uniracers* as it was known Stateside), which appeared a year later.

While all three titles were superb games in their own right – *Walker* being an excellent blaster that saw you controlling a huge mech and taking on hordes of tiny soldiers and *Hired Guns* being an excellent spin on *Dungeon Master* that allowed up to four players to participate at the same time – it was *Unirally* that would give the Scottish developer its next big break.

KANNED KIRBY

Although he started off life as a platform hero, Kirby soon proved himself to be a rather versatile blob, appearing in a variety of different genres on the SNES. Sadly, one of the most interesting concepts he was involved in never actually saw the light of day, as Mike explains.

"We made this game using the SNES mouse where you had a jelly blob being stretched and pinged (like an elastic band) around the screen. This game was heavily reminiscent of an old spectrum game called *Bugaboo The Flea*, but improved the jumping and direction by use of the mouse. Nintendo took a liking to this and even allowed us to use the *Kirby* brand. The game was being written by the same coder who took on *Cutiepoo*, having persuaded Dave to give him another chance. The game did progress slowly for a while and many (*many*!) levels were done, but Tony failed to fix some fairly fundamental problems in the game code and, as a result, it never progressed as well as it should have. Nintendo tired of it and as the mouse wasn't selling very well anyway, the game was canned."







[ZX Spectrum] *Bugaboo The Flea* was DMA's inspiration for its canned Kirby game.

The Nintendo Factor

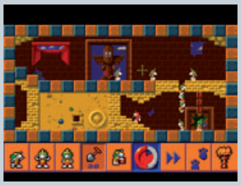
Published by Nintendo (DMA's first new publisher since Psygnosis), the success of *Unirally* led the Japanese company to ask DMA to work on its upcoming console, the Ultra 64 (or N64 as it was eventually known). The deal was that DMA would create an exclusive title for the machine, which turned out to be the wonderful (if often underrated) *Body Harvest*. Sadly, despite being amazingly inventive (it was effectively a more vehicle-based take on DMA's *Grand Theft Auto*), numerous issues with Nintendo meant that the game faced various delays, eventually arriving three years after its original due date (it was supposed to be a launch game for Nintendo's machine). A final blow saw Nintendo dropping the game altogether, leaving Midway to pick up the pieces.

"I wasn't involved directly with *Body Harvest*, but the constant game changes could be



[Amiga] *Lemmings* was a massive success for DMA and catapulted the company into the limelight.

THREE TO AVOID



All New World Of Lemmings

Although the third official update of *Lemmings* isn't a shockingly bad game, it's definitely proof that ideas for the series were beginning to run rather thin. Level design felt lacking compared to past efforts, while the watered-down tribes were a real disappointment compared to the clever groups that were available in *Lemmings 2*. What a shame.



Tanktics

Although there's some wonderful ideas crammed into *Tanktics*, it just doesn't really work. Part-strategy, part-puzzle, part-micromanagement; it's a strange mishmash of genres that you want to love, mainly because it's just so darned charming. Sadly, all the charm in the world can't save this misfire from 1999, which is a pity, as we love the concept.



Wild Metal Country

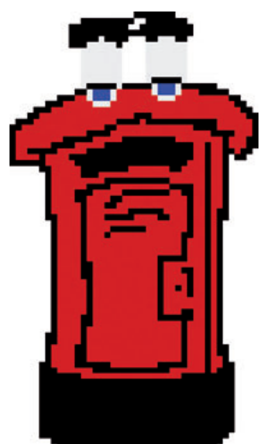
It's difficult to believe that this game was made by DMA Design as it just feels so… well… ordinary. There are certainly some nice ideas on offer, but they're so well hidden under the average gameplay that it requires the patience of an absolute saint to discover them. Oh, and if you must play it, stay well away from the Dreamcast version.

felt throughout the company," is Mike's diplomatic reply about the situation. "It was also pretty draining for the folk on it, as there was just never an end is sight. Nintendo just couldn't seem to make their mind up about what it wanted to do, or so it seemed from the trenches…"

Mike wasn't the only one who was frustrated by *Body Harvest*'s slow progress. "From the outside, there seemed to be a big huge deal made about this by Nintendo," continues Brian. "It was going to be a launch title to start with, then it slipped, then it slipped again. It was definitely one of those titles that was hyped a lot so the expectations were high and by the time it came out, no one seemed to be bothered any more. We (Iguana) even got *Turok* out before *Body Harvest* finally hit the shelves and we started that a year after I had left DMA."

Interestingly, despite the slow progress of working on Nintendo's new machine, it nevertheless proved to be a great piece of kit to work on, with Brian in particular having plenty of praise for it. "If you include all of the hardware [we used at DMA] during that period, my favourite still boils down to the N64. It's an elegant piece of hardware, decently fast and very well put together. The PSone was a clusterf**k in comparison."

> **"We all know each other pretty well and understand each other's strengths"**
>
> RUSSELL KAY ON REUNITING AT REALTIME WORLDS



THE GTA EFFECT

While DMA was still toiling away on *Body Harvest*, its latest game, *Grand Theft Auto*, arrived in 1997 and immediately began to earn praise from journalists and notoriety from non-gamers – a trait that's continued to hold true for the series all the way up to last year's release of *Grand Theft Auto IV*. Originally released on the PC and later ported to Sony's PlayStation, it proved to be a huge success thanks to the adult nature of the gameplay – assassinations, beating up Hare Krishnas and carjacking were all par for the course – and howls of protest were heard from newspapers like the *Daily Mail* who were incensed with *GTA*'s content, despite the fact that it carried an 18 certificate.

The biggest pull of *Grand Theft Auto*, however, was the sheer amount of freedom that it offered you, something it shared with *Body Harvest*, which was finally released a year later in 1998. While there was a mission structure in place that had you performing numerous nefarious tasks for the city bad guys, the real beauty of the game (and something still prevalent with later releases) is the freedom to pretty much do whatever you wanted.

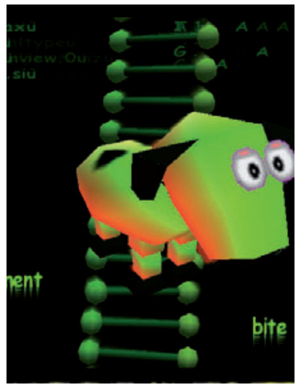
Not since the original *Lemmings* had there been so much commercial and critical interest in a DMA game (we don't know anyone who didn't own a copy of the PlayStation version), and DMA went on to release an official sequel in 1999 (the two London add-on packs were by third parties), which offered new additions to the gameplay that ranged from carrying out missions for the city's gangs, increased law enforcement, the ability to carry

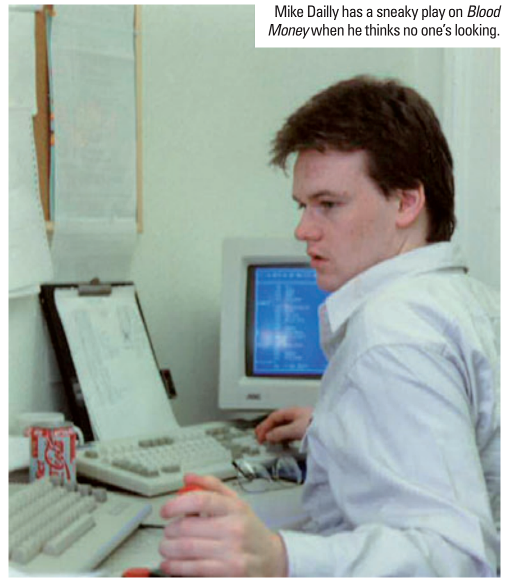
TIMELINE

- **1983** DAVE JONES, RUSSELL KAY AND STEVE HAMMOND REGULARLY MEET UP AT DUNDEE'S KINGSWAY AMATEUR COMPUTER CLUB.
- **1988** DAVE AND THE REST OF THE TEAM BEGIN DISCUSSING NAMES FOR THEIR NEW COMPANY. THEY EVENTUALLY SETTLE ON DMA. THEY ALSO STRIKE A PUBLISHING DEAL WITH LIVERPOOL-BASED PSYGNOSIS.
- **1989** MIKE DAILLY GETS DISMISSED FROM COLLEGE AND STARTS WORK AT DMA FULL-TIME. DMA MOVES INTO ITS NEW OFFICE.
- **1990** DAVE BEGINS WORK ON A NEW AMIGA CHEAT CARTRIDGE FOR DATEL, BUT IT ISN'T FINISHED IN TIME. IT'S EVENTUALLY SHELVED ALONG WITH THE GAMES GORE AND CUTIEPOO.
- **1991** LEMMINGS IS RELEASED TO CRITICAL ACCLAIM AND SELLS AN ASTONISHINGLY HIGH 55,000 UNITS ON ITS FIRST DAY OF RELEASE.
- **1993** WALKER FINALLY MAKES ITS DEBUT ON THE AMIGA. DAVE FIRST STARTED WORK ON IT IN 1989.
- **1994** DMA PARTS COMPANY WITH PREVIOUS PUBLISHER PSYGNOSIS. UNIRALLY IS INSTEAD PUBLISHED BY NINTENDO.
- **1997** GRAND THEFT AUTO IS RELEASED AND INSTANTLY BECOMES A HIT THANKS TO ITS OPEN-ENDED GAMEPLAY AND THE NOTORIETY IT GENERATES VIA THE PRESS. DMA IS ALSO BOUGHT BY UK PUBLISHER GREMLIN INTERACTIVE IN THE SAME YEAR.
- **1999** GREMLIN INTERACTIVE IS ACQUIRED BY INFOGRAMES. DMA IS EVENTUALLY SOLD TO ROCKSTAR GAMES AND BECOMES ROCKSTAR NORTH.
- **2000** DAVE JONES LEAVES DMA.
- **2002** DAVE JONES OFFICIALLY FOUNDS REALTIME WORLDS, WHICH CURRENTLY HAS OVER 2,000 EMPLOYEES.
- **2007** CRACKDOWN IS RELEASED BY REALTIME WORLDS AND GOES ON TO SELL OVER 1.5 MILLION UNITS IN ITS FIRST SIX MONTHS OF RELEASE.



[PS2] Only Dave Jones had any input in *Grand Theft Auto III*, but he left before it was finished.




Mike Dailly has a sneaky play on *Blood Money* when he thinks no one's looking.



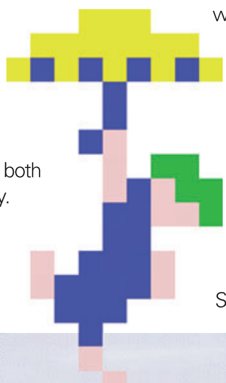


[Amiga] *Gore* was one of many games that were started by DMA, but never actually completed.

out side missions – such as working as a taxi driver – and being able to ride trains (on the PC and Dreamcast versions only).

As well as marking the arrival of the *GTA* franchise, 1997 also saw DMA being sold to Gremlin Interactive (previously known as Gremlin Graphics) and Dave taking up the mantle of creative director. Although Gremlin had been impressed with the technology that DMA had created, the eventual union wasn't without its problems.

"Gremlin had been impressed with DMA because we'd been using the same graphics engine [3DMA] over several projects, including *Clan Wars* and *Attack* [both later cancelled], *Wild Metal Country* and the *GTA 2* editor," reveals Mike. "They wanted a collaboration, which would allow both sites to use the same technology. Both sites' R&D teams worked very closely for a time, with several tips constantly going back and forth. Unfortunately, the head of Gremlin's R&D had some very different views on how things should progress and we simply didn't agree. We basically thought he was mad, and the collaboration soon broke down. Gremlin did progress with their 3D engine (it was called Mr Dog for a time at least, after the Gremlin team watched an Eddie Izzard concert one lunchtime up at DMA), and it was eventually used in *Hogs Of War*."



Things were not going well, though, as Gremlin Interactive was later purchased by Infogrames (now Atari) in 1999, which was complicated further by the fact that BMG Interactive (who went on to eventually become Rockstar), who had published *GTA 1* and *2* still had a deal in place with DMA, which saw Infogrames selling the Scottish developer to Take-Two (parent company of Rockstar).

The many changes, and the fact that the likes of Russell, Mike, Steve and Brian had already left the company took a visible toll on DMA's later products, with the likes of *Tanktics* and *Wild Metal Country* lacking the polish of earlier games (even if they did have plenty of decent ideas buried deep beneath the surface). DMA became known as Rockstar North, with Dave leaving while *GTA III* was being completed. Needless to say, several games were lost during the period of upheaval, ranging from N64 ports of *Grand Theft Auto* and *Wild Metal Country*, a port of *Unreal* that was due to appear on the N64DD and the intriguing *Attack!*, a game Mike was particularly sad about losing.

"It was a simple concept of a single character who acted as chieftain and controlled many clansmen in a caveman environment," recalls Mike. "The idea of small characters versus dinosaurs gave rise to many funny concepts and should have been an easy game to make work. In fact, it could have been a great little game (and one I'm tempted to do myself one day), but as was sometimes the case with simple games, people tried to do new features without making sure the core game was there and they simply made a complete mess of it."

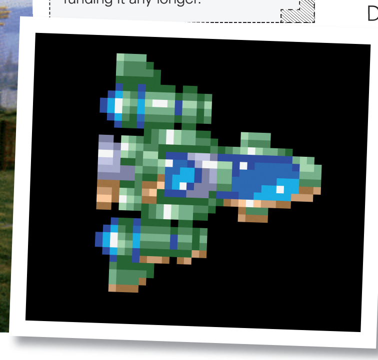
The demise of DMA Design does have a happy ending, however. When Dave left Rockstar North he set up a new studio in Dundee that became a subsidiary of Rage Software, then later Realtime Worlds in 2002. Many of the original creative minds of DMA Design can now be found there, including Mike and Russell. Something Russell is more than happy about. "It feels good," he reveals. "We all know each other pretty well and understand each other's strengths and weaknesses. It also makes working together a complementary experience; you know when someone else can pick up the slack."

MISSING GEMS?

It's rare for a studio to be so forward about its missing games, but Mike has so many entertaining stories we just had to put them in print. "We got contacted by an artist looking for work (one J Lewis) and so Dave let me start a new shoot-'em-up with him," remembers Mike about an unnamed shooter he worked on. "*Battle Squadron* had just been released and we felt we could better it. Although I started on it, I was taken off it when Dave got the contract for the PC-Engine version of *Shadow Of The Beast*. Another coder, Dave Whiteman, had got in touch and was given my source, but progress was painful. The last straw came when after a week of hard work he came in to show his progress and all he'd done was some fading text on the screen."

Another promising-sounding title was *Clan Wars*. "This was basically a Scottish castle in the *Populous* mould, but in full 3D," continues Mike. Sadly the game never really got anywhere due to an initial lack of staff, a lead programmer who spent a year doing pretty much nothing, and the poor morale of the rest of the team. Once the lead programmer was replaced rapid progress was made, but by then it was too late, DMA had been taken over by Gremlin, and wasn't interested in funding it any longer.


The DMA team as they appeared back in 1991. According to Mike, pulling silly poses was mandatory.



Special thanks to Mike Dailly for all his help and supplying rare screen shots

THE GAMES OF DMA DESIGN

DMA Design managed to release a fair few games before it became Rockstar North and it covered a wide variety of different genres. How many of the following games have you played?



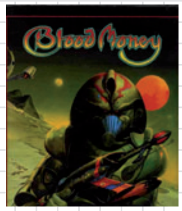
MENACE

» **Year:** 1988

» **Buy it for:** £6

Considering the imagination packed into later releases, *Menace* is a surprisingly generic shoot-'em-up. It's certainly fun, taking elements and enemies from both *Gradius* and *R-Type*, but it's not the greatest game in DMA's canon.





BLOOD MONEY

» **Year:** 1989

» **Buy it for:** £4

Astonishing intro aside, *Blood Money* doesn't really make the cut as a classic shooter as it's just too ridiculously tough. A shame really as the competitive play – dead enemies drop money – really does help this stand apart from similar shooters.





LEMMINGS

» **Year:** 1991

» **Buy it for:** £5

One of the greatest puzzle games of all time. An amazing concept was given fiendishly designed puzzles, brilliantly recognisable tunes and some of the cutest sprites to ever appear in a videogame. If you've not played *Lemmings* you don't deserve to be called a gamer.

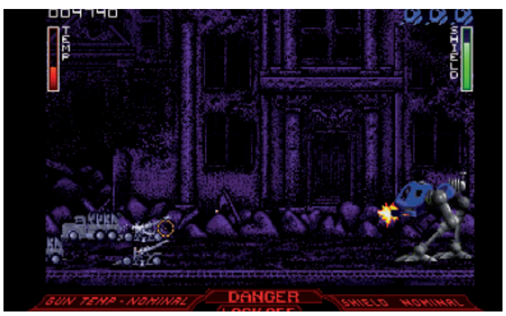


MUST PLAY









WALKER

» **Year:** 1993

» **Buy it for:** £10

A fantastic blaster where you control a huge mech and must blow away hordes of tiny enemies. An excellent control system – the mouse controls your mech's guns – superb animation and polished gameplay make this one a real must-play game.



OH NO! MORE LEMMINGS

» **Year:** 1991

» **Buy it for:** £8

Mixed feelings on this one really. While it keeps the core concept of the original game intact, levels feel nowhere near as clever in either execution or design. It's almost as if it was rushed to market due to the success of *Lemmings*…



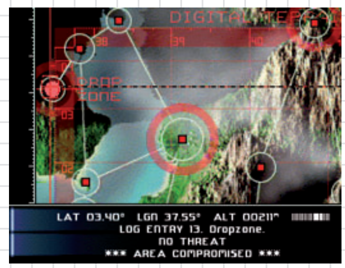


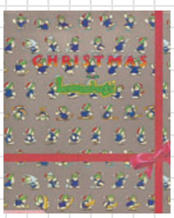
HIRED GUNS

» **Year:** 1993

» **Buy it for:** £12

Playing like a cross between *Eye Of The Beholder* and a more straightforward shooter, *Hired Guns* is typical of DMA at its inventive best and remains a challenging – if slightly fiddly – adventure that has astounding visuals and great atmosphere.



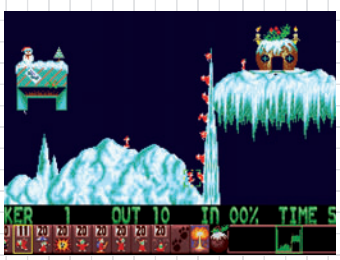


HOLIDAY LEMMINGS 1993

» **Year:** 1993

» **Buy it for:** £10

The high price, lack of levels – just 32 – and simple level designs put some off, but there's something wonderfully endearing about saving a bunch of tiny creatures that are dressed as Father Christmas.



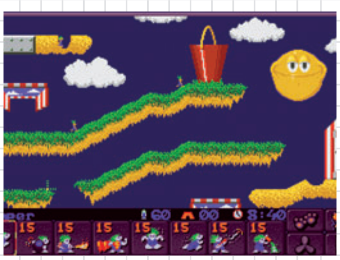


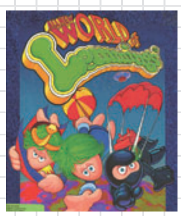
LEMMINGS 2: THE TRIBES

» **Year:** 1993

» **Buy it for:** £10

Superb sequel that boasted fiendishly designed levels, loads of new lemmings to master and greatly improved aesthetics. Not quite as accessible as the original game, but an outstanding effort that still plays well today.



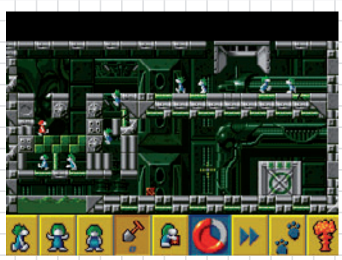


ALL NEW WORLD OF LEMMINGS

» **Year:** 1995

» **Buy it for:** £10

Maybe it's the fat lemmings or cumbersome controls, or the lacklustre level design, but we just can't get on with this sequel to *Lemmings 2*. A poor evolution that lacks any of the brilliance of its predecessor.



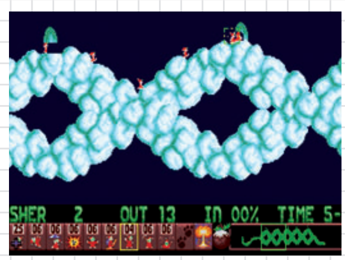


HOLIDAY LEMMINGS 1994

» **Year:** 1994

» **Buy it for:** £10

A solid follow-up to the previous year's effort that featured 32 levels, plus the original 32 from the 1993 edition. Again the levels are rather easy, but it's so joyful to play, you'll ignore the fact that there's no real depth on offer.

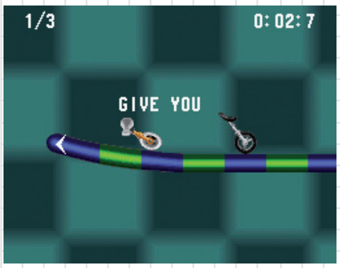


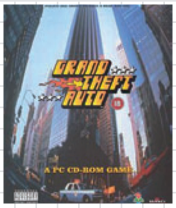


UNIRALLY

» Year: 1994
» Buy it for: £15

More uniqueness from DMA, and a superb racer to boot. Ignore the simplistic visuals and just lose yourself in the amazingly fast on-screen action and inventive level design. One of the SNES's best multiplayer games.



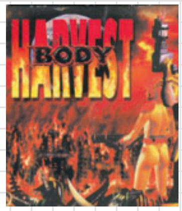


GRAND THEFT AUTO

» Year: 1997
» Buy it for: Free

The original *GTA* is still an excellent adventure that saw DMA once again pushing the gaming envelope in new and exciting directions. The PC version is now a free download at www.rockstargames.com/classics/gta.html.





BODY HARVEST

» Year: 1998
» Buy it for: £5

A wildly inventive game that shares many similarities with *GTA*. Its lengthy gestation period meant that it looked a little outdated compared to many games of the time, but it's still a fantastic and immersive arcade adventure.





SPACE STATION SILICON VALLEY

» Year: 1998
» Buy it for: £10

It may have had a couple of glitches, but *Space Station Silicon Valley* remains one of DMA's most innovative games. Who said controlling robotic animals with a small microchip couldn't be fun?





SHADOW OF THE BEAST

» Year: 1990
» Buy it for: £2

Proving that no task was too big for them, one of DMA Design's most stunning conversion achievements were the impressive ports of *Shadow of the Beast* to the PC Engine CDROM2 and the Commodore 64.





GRAND THEFT AUTO LONDON 1961/1969

» Year: 1999
» Buy it for: Free

Although not officially designed by DMA, the Dundee-based team nevertheless provided support for the titles so we're including them here for completeness sake. Sadly, they both lack the sparkle of *GTA*.





WILD METAL COUNTRY

» Year: 1999
» Buy it for: £8

DMA and tanks obviously don't mix as this was another nice idea that was let down by infuriating controls and pathetic AI. The Dreamcast version is even trickier to get to grips with. Another title to avoid at all costs.

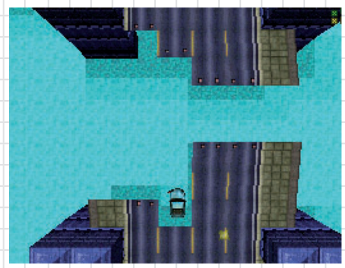




GRAND THEFT AUTO 2

» Year: 1999
» Buy it for: Free

Greatly improved sequel that offered better visuals, new side missions and the ability to work for different rival gangs. Like the original *GTA* it's currently available to download for free alongside *Wild Metal Country*.





GRAND THEFT AUTO III

» Year: 2001
» Buy it for: £6

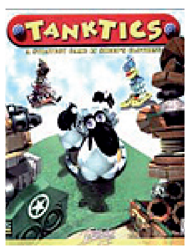
The final game under the DMA banner is arguably its most influential, spawning gargantuan follow-ups that have doggedly stuck to the same tried-and-tested formula. A perfect example of a franchise making that tricky transition from 2D to 3D.



MUST AVOID









TANKTICS

» Year: 1999
» Buy it for: £5

While this is an interesting take on the RTS genre, it's let down by fiddly controls that see you constantly battling against the game instead of just enjoying it. Probably the weakest game in DMA's eclectic canon.

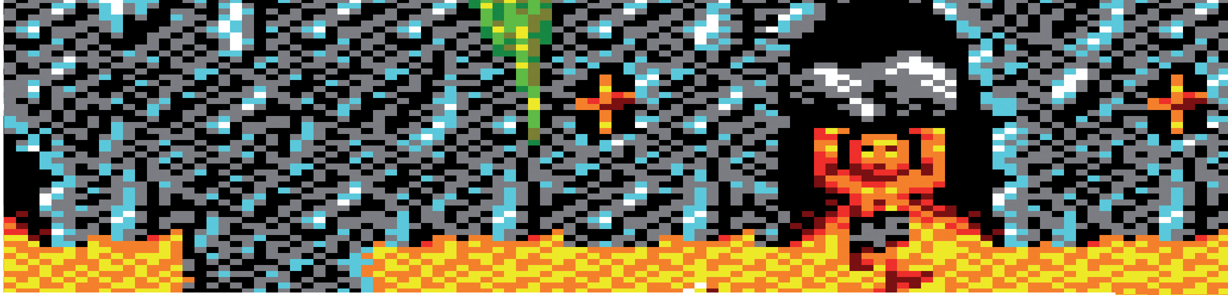


BALLISTIX

» Year: 1989
» Buy it for: £10+

This was one of a couple of ports that DMA worked on (*Shadow Of The Beast* being another) and the studio managed to turn out several decent versions. Russell Kay worked on the PC version, while Mike Dailly handled coding duties on the Commodore 64 version.





RENEGADE III: THE FINAL CHAPTER

A GAME YOU'LL NEVER PRESERVE IN A TIME CAPSULE



- **PUBLISHER:** IMAGINE
- **RELEASED:** 1989
- **GENRE:** BEAT 'EM UP
- **FEATURED HARDWARE:** AMSTRAD
- **EXPECT TO PAY:** £1



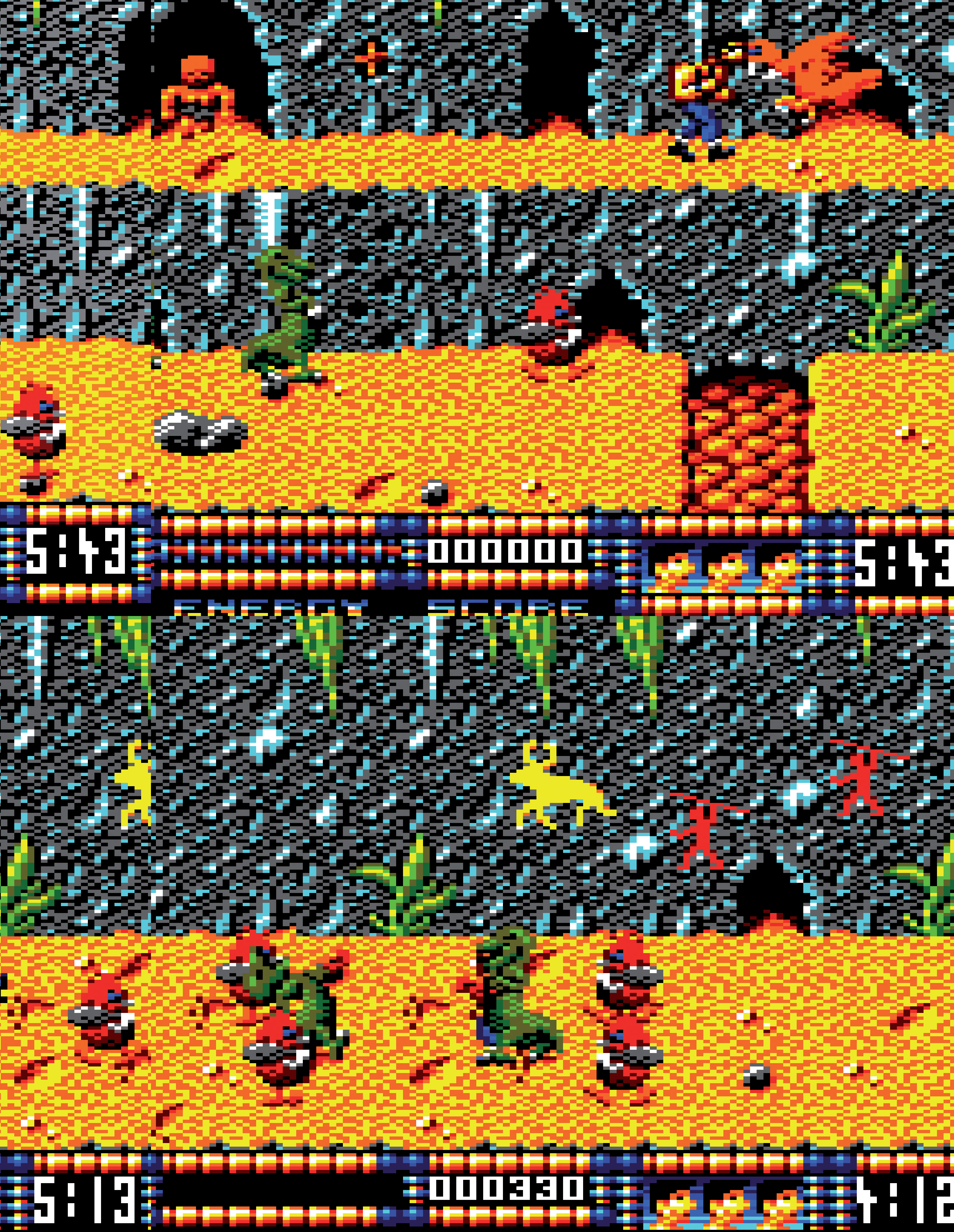
HISTORY

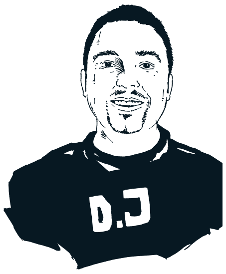
In hindsight I was slightly foolish to ever think *Renegade III* was going to patch on the brilliance of *Target Renegade.* I remember it as if it was yesterday, spotting the screenshots of the game in the pages of *Amstrad Action*, showing its vest-wearing hero punching the stuffing out of mummies, dinosaurs, jesters and knights. *Renegade III* plays and looks like a children's version of the popular 8-bit brawler – a direction that is so bad it actually makes a bit of a mockery out of the franchise to be honest. In typical *Renegade* fashion, *Renegade III* finds your hero travelling through various stages to rescue your kidnapped girlfriend. But it calls on a well hackneyed plot gimmick that we really should have seen coming; all of the levels in the game were set in different time zones – and we're not referring to the GMT variety.

From an opening prehistoric stage, where our burly hero has to face off against confused cavemen and baby T-rexes, to a closing mission set way in a future inhabited by robots and UFOs, it became obvious that the time-travelling plot device was simply a shameful way to put a curious plaster on the game's gaudy visuals, tetchy gameplay and problematic collision detection; all of which are elements that make the game feel like it was programmed sometime in the dark ages. The fact that the game doesn't even boast a co-op mode was also a huge oversight by developer Imagine, as it could have made a bad game passable.

Had the graphics, controls and presentation improved during the course of the game – to cleverly coincide with the advances in technology that had occurred in the epoch you were fighting in – we'd probably be telling you that *Renegade III* was one of the single greatest pieces of post-modernism entertainment ever created. Sadly the game is just a lazy sequel with testing gameplay (although the Speccy version isn't entirely abysmal, we hasten to add) that proves anything with the subtitle 'The Final Chapter' hanging over its neck is worth avoiding – just like the confused cavemen and baby T-rexes.




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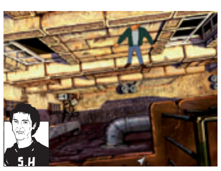


>> Hello and welcome to a brand new look for the reviews section. This month we've been checking out the latest iPhone releases, getting back to grips with Pikmin and loving Revolution's update of Broken Sword.

PICKS OF THE MONTH



DARRAN
R-Type Dimensions
I was really impressed with what has been achieved with *R-Type Dimensions*.

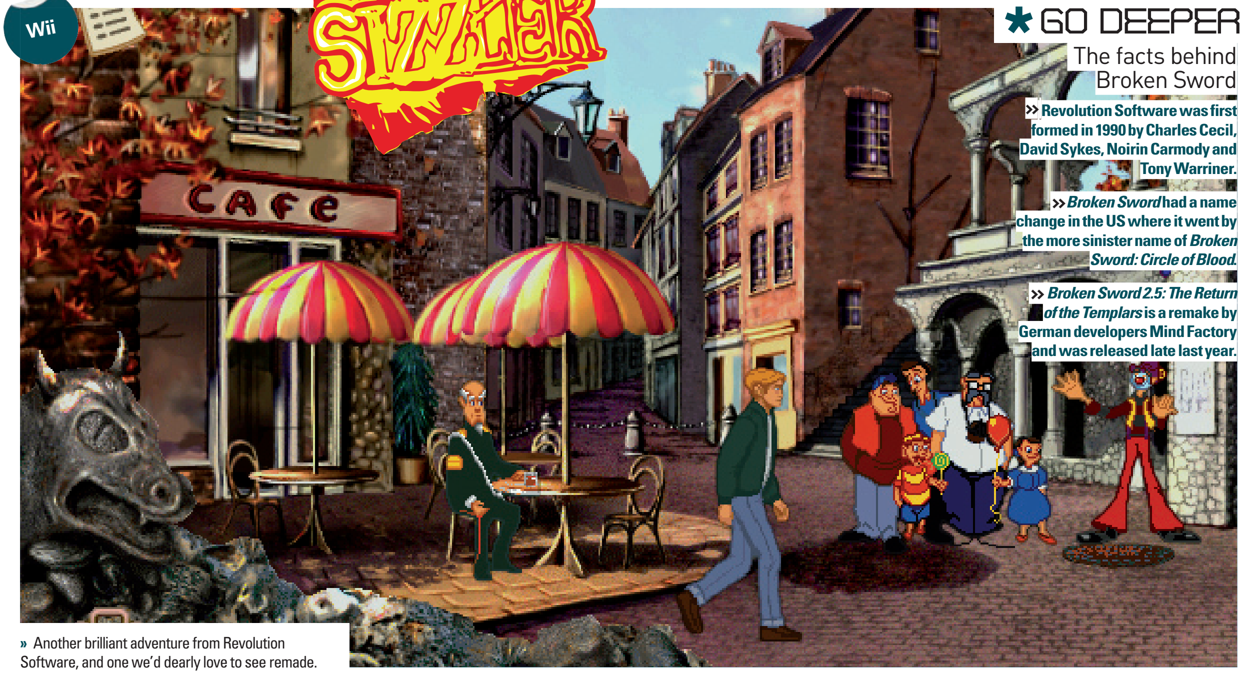


STUART
Broken Sword: Director's Cut
I was rather sceptical, but *Broken Sword* works brilliantly on the Wii. And Nico is hot.



ASH
Pikmin
A classic game with far better controls. What more could you want? Well, *Pikmin* 2…

>> BROKEN SWORD



» Another brilliant adventure from Revolution Software, and one we'd dearly love to see remade.

GO DEEPER

The facts behind Broken Sword

>> Revolution Software was first formed in 1990 by Charles Cecil, David Sykes, Noirin Carmody and Tony Warriner.

>> *Broken Sword* had a name change in the US where it went by the more sinister name of *Broken Sword: Circle of Blood*.

>> *Broken Sword 2.5: The Return of the Templars* is a remake by German developers Mind Factory and was released late last year.

Broken Sword: The Shadow Of The Templars – Director's Cut

LIKE FOOTBALL, IT'S A GAME OF TWO HALVES

INFORMATION

- **FEATURED SYSTEM:** Wii
- **ALSO AVAILABLE ON:** NDS
- **RELEASED:** OUT NOW
- **PRICE:** £34.99
- **PUBLISHER:** UBISOFT
- **DEVELOPER:** REVOLUTION SOFTWARE
- **PLAYERS:** 1-2

BRIEF HISTORY

» *Broken Sword: The Shadow of the Templars* was originally released in 1996. An instant hit thanks to its clever puzzles and beautiful visuals, it went on to spawn three sequels: *The Smoking Mirror, The Sleeping Dragon* and *The Angel of Death*. The original also received a very good GBA port.

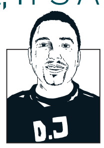
WHY NOT TRY

▼ SOMETHING OLD
BENEATH A STEEL SKY (AMIGA)



▼ SOMETHING NEW
SAM & MAX: EPISODE 1 (Wii)





Has it really been 13 years since *Broken Sword* first exploded onto our screens in a shower of exploding glass? We ask this because after playing through Revolution Software's new update, it feels like a brand new Wii game. Sure, there are telltale signs that this isn't the case, but this is nevertheless a tremendous effort that bodes well for the possibility of future point-and-click adventures on Nintendo's console.

While the *Director's Cut* lacks the exciting opening of the original game, it nevertheless does a great job of dragging you into this marvellous adventure. After a brief encounter with a deadly mime artist, you're effortlessly led through a series of clever puzzles that see you controlling photographer Nico Collard as she attempts to unravel her father's mysterious past and the murder she's just witnessed.

These new sections impress thanks to their brilliantly detailed locations, the new character portraits – drawn by *Watchman* artist Dave Gibbons – and the many ingenious puzzles that see you manipulating the remote in order to solve them. There are plenty of hours of new gameplay and story, which retains the sharp wit of *Broken Sword*, and smoothly interweaves with the original script. It would have been all too easy for Revolution Software to simply offer Nico's story as a separate side adventure, so it's pleasing to see that it's gone to such lengths to weld everything together so thoroughly.

The only real issue we have with this *Director's Cut* is that the same amount of care and attention hasn't been given to Stobbart's part of the adventure. For example, interactions between characters do use new portraits, but they're not animated, giving the overall style a somewhat half-baked feel. Of course, the adventure itself is still as brilliant as ever and Revolution Software has added enough new elements to keep the gameplay fresh and exciting, but this overall lack of attention does grates us a little.

OPINION



I'm a huge point-and-click fan, so it's a great pleasure to see this classic genre piece finally come to Wii and DS. It works perfectly on both systems and is now even better thanks to the wealth of extra material that Revolution has integrated into the original. Brilliant work guys.

Ashley Day

In a nutshell

What we have here is a hallmark classic that's been improved thanks to a far more involving story line, excellent characterisation and wonderfully intuitive controls. What more could you wish for?

>> Scores

Presentation	86%
Graphics	80%
Sound	88%
Playability	94%
Addictivity	95%
Overall	**90%**

Magic Ball

NOT SO MUCH MAGIC AS TRAGIC

» **FEATURED SYSTEM:** PSN » **ALSO AVAILABLE ON:** NA » **RELEASED:** OUT NOW
» **PRICE:** £7.99 » **PUBLISHER:** CREAT STUDIOS » **DEVELOPER:** TIK GAMES » **PLAYERS:** 1-2



With so many *Breakout* and *Arkanoid* clones appearing on Apple's iPhone, it's somewhat refreshing to see one appear on a home console, even if it is rather average.

The first thing that strikes you about this new PSN download is just how striking everything looks. Highly polished and enhanced by some solid physics, *Magic Ball* is a highly impressive-looking game that's a world away from the basic 2D Breakout clones of old. Power-ups are also enhanced compared to the good old days. While you still get traditional weapons like lasers and the ability to extend your bat, new effects like gusts of wind and meteor strikes greatly spice the action up and give developer Creat Studios a chance to show off its impressive physics engine.

Sadly, for all its impressive visuals, *Magic Ball* is a surprisingly bland game that soon becomes a chore to play through. Stages are very similar to each other, while the forced perspective nature of the visuals means it's often too easy to lose track of your ball behind stacked-up items. It's also incredibly easy, with only later stages offering any real challenge to skilled players. A saving grace potentially comes with the multiplayer mode that Creat has included, but sadly it's so laggy it's virtually unplayable.

Magic Ball certainly looks the business and is a brave attempt to revitalise a classic genre of old, but its high price point, bland gameplay and disappointing online mode means this is best avoided.

» Scores

Presentation	80%
Graphics	82%
Sound	65%
Playability	50%
Addictivity	45%

Overall 55%

PSN



» Quite possibly one of the most cheerful looking games you'll ever see on the PlayStation Network.



OPINION



I actually quite liked this. Yes, it's stupidly easy, but the well thought-out physics and amusing range of power-ups does help to keep *Magic Ball* nice and fresh. The only real downside is the high price. I'd have been much happier paying a fiver for it.

Stuart Hunt

VC



MERCS

» **SYSTEM:** VIRTUAL CONSOLE
» **PRICE:** 800 POINTS » **PLAYERS:** 1

» **With weekly WiiWare** releases not outstripping the VC ones, it's refreshing to see that there's still plenty of great content to enjoy. The Mega Drive's conversion of Capcom's MERCS has aged very well indeed. Gameplay is fast and frantic, enemies come thick and fast and there's a great amount of additional content in the Original Mode. It's just a pity that only a single-player mode was included.

» Score **75%**

Wii



Animal Crossing: Let's Go to the City

» **SYSTEM:** Wii
» **PRICE:** £39.99 » **PLAYERS:** 1-2

» **Nintendo's latest *Animal*** *Crossing* title leaves us in two minds. It retains the brilliance of past adventures and remains a joyful world to live in, yet it's pretty much a lazy port of the DS game. There's a new city hub you can visit, and the ability to chat to friends via Wii Speak is a fun addition, but this isn't the update we were expecting.

» Score **62%**

NDS



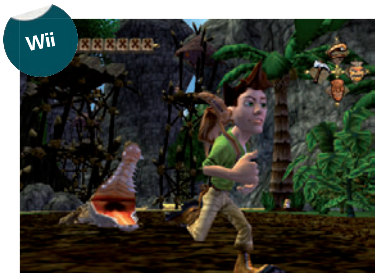
Populous DS

» **SYSTEM:** NDS
» **PRICE:** £29.99 » **PLAYERS:** 1-4

» **If we can** say one positive thing about this update of *Populous*, it's that the interface used is absolutely outstanding. Menus are quick and easy to navigate, while the touch interface is always responsive. Sadly, *Populous DS* is let down by its small playing area, unchallenging levels and constant need to scroll around. Play this for a few hours and you'll immediately see why EA passed on publishing it.

» Score **51%**

Wii



Pitfall: The Big Adventure

» **SYSTEM:** Wii
» **PRICE:** £19.99 » **PLAYERS:** 1-2

» **Okay, so the** latest *Pitfall* is clearly aimed at kids, but it's still a pretty enjoyable (if amazingly easy game). Spread across 60 stages and featuring the now obligatory mini-games that all Wii titles seem to have, it comes with an added history lesson because the original *Pitfall!* and *Pitfall: The Lost Caverns* are included as well.

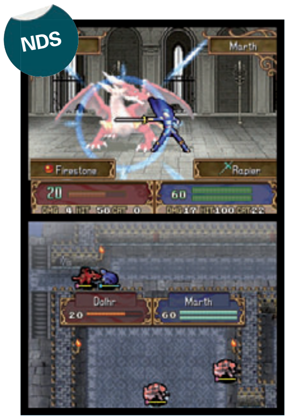
» Score **69%**

Fire Emblem: Shadow Dragon

INTELLIGENT SYSTEMS GO BACK TO THE START

» **FEATURED SYSTEM:** NDS » **ALSO AVAILABLE ON:** NA » **RELEASED:** OUT NOW » **PRICE:** £29.99
» **PUBLISHER:** NINTENDO » **DEVELOPER:** INTELLIGENT SYSTEMS » **PLAYERS:** 1-4

NDS





» The visuals are nothing special, but underneath lies some incredibly absorbing gameplay.

For those unaware, *Shadow Dragon* is actually a remake of *Fire Emblem: Shadow Dragons And The Blade Of Light*, which was first released on the NES all the way back in 1990. Similar in style to Nintendo's *Advance Wars* series (hardly surprising as both franchises are the brainchild of Intelligent Systems), *Shadow Dragon* is an excellent update. It doesn't boast stunning visuals or dazzling new mechanics, but it does prove that a gripping story, great characterisation and genuinely absorbing gameplay can make for a brilliantly entertaining game.

While *Shadow Dragon's* story is one you'll have heard many times before, it's elevated above the usual popcorn fare thanks to some genuinely entertaining and well-written characters. There are your usual twists and turns along the way, but the strong characterisation – coupled with the fact that a defeated



hero can no longer be used for the rest of the game – makes you really care for your group of adventurers.

The *Fire Emblem* series has always been rich in strategy, with *Shadow Dragon* being no different. Split over 25 chapters, some of which can take well over an hour to complete, careful management of your team is the only way you'll clear later stages, and the fact that you can only control five characters at any time means that you really need to think about each and every move. A solid and enjoyable remake that will please veterans and newcomers alike.

OPINION

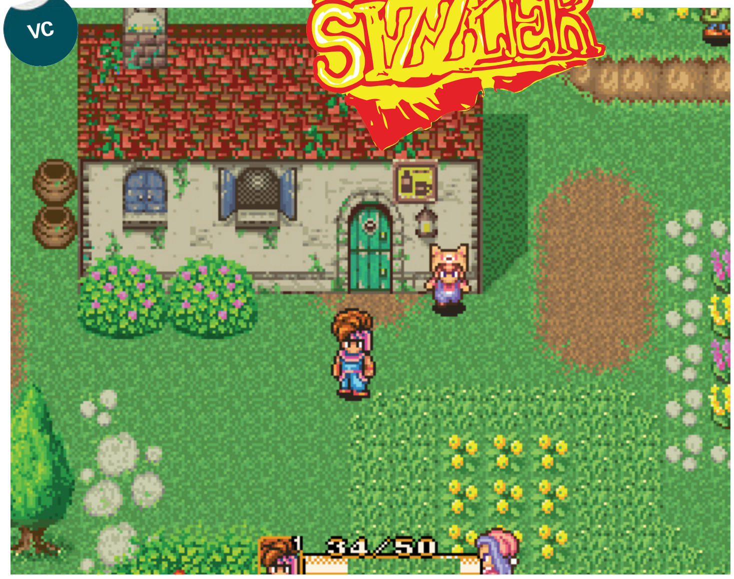
Shadow Dragon is one ugly looking game, but the engaging characters and addictive gameplay soon draw you in. Multiplayer battles have managed to make lunchtimes more enjoyable as it's refreshing to beat Darran at something other than *Garou: Mark Of The Wolves.*

Stuart Hunt

» Scores

Presentation	85%
Graphics	68%
Sound	84%
Playability	88%
Addictivity	86%
Overall	**86%**

VC



» It's one of the greatest adventures to ever appear on the SNES, and now it's available on the VC. Yay!

The Secret Of Mana

SQUARE'S CLASSIC RPG FINALLY HITS THE VC

» **FEATURED SYSTEM:** Virtual Console » **ALSO AVAILABLE ON:** NA » **RELEASED:** OUT NOW
» **PRICE:** 800 POINTS » **PUBLISHER:** SQUARE ENIX » **DEVELOPER:** SQUARE ENIX » **PLAYERS:** 1-3

Now here's a very nice surprise. We were expecting a cynical update of Square's hit arcade adventure long before it ever arrived on the VC, but here it is and it's still as wonderful as ever. While the story now feels a little twee, the sheer imagination that's been crammed into *The Secret Of Mana* still manages to impress us. Combat is fluid and easy to get to grips with, there are some fantastic bosses to take down and the ring inventory system is still a joy to use. The AI of your team mates is now starting to feel a little antiquated, but it's a relatively small price to pay for such a genuinely enjoyable game. And the music… wow! Sixteen years after it first made its debut the varied tunes – one moment sweeping epics that can take the breath away, the next, wistful melodies that almost bring a tear to your eye – still pack one hell of



a punch. Then there's the fact that the game itself still looks beautiful, with fantastic character design, excellent animation and gorgeously detailed locations. From the moment *The Secret Of Mana* starts you're instantly drawn into its enchanting world and won't want to leave until you discover its titular secret. Considering how much the original game now sells for, this VC release is a bargain. If you've never played *Mana* before, download it straight away. You're in for a treat.

OPINION

If you're a fan of Nintendo's *Zelda* series then *The Secret Of Mana* will be right up your street. Sensational looking and with a gob-smackingly good soundtrack, it remains a joy to play through – even if the AI of your team mates now feels a little ropey. A treasured classic, no mistake.

Stuart Hunt

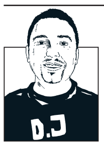
» Scores

Presentation	90%
Graphics	95%
Sound	96%
Playability	90%
Addictivity	89%
Overall	**92%**

The House Of The Dead: OVERKILL

ZOMBIES. HOSPITALS. GORE. IT'S OVERKILL

» **FEATURED SYSTEM:** Wii » **ALSO AVAILABLE ON:** NA » **RELEASED:** OUT NOW
» **PRICE:** £39.99 » **PUBLISHER:** SEGA » **DEVELOPER:** HEADSTRONG GAMES » **PLAYERS:** 1-2



If you're hoping to find the original *The House Of The Dead* hidden within this reboot, prepare for disappointment. What you will find, however, is an excellent re-imaging of the classic lightgun series that has more F words in it than a weekend at Gordon Ramsey's.

Utilising the grindhouse period of movies that Quintin Tarantino and Robert Rodriguez unsuccessfully tried to revive, *OVERKILL* is gory, profanity laden, but above all, fun.

Indeed, it's *OVERKILL's* new Pulp setting that adds immeasurably to the onscreen action, with leads Isaac Washington and Agent G delivering just as many expletives as their guns pump out bullets. Yes it's very crude, yes it's crass, but it works brilliantly and it gives the game a life and character that similar efforts lack.

Gameplay is also resoundingly solid, with your onscreen cursor responding beautifully via the Wii's nunchuck and remote (we'd advise you to stay away from the clunky gun set though). There's also a host of unlockables and gun upgrades to get your hands on, meaning that there's always a reason to return to this excellent little blaster.

Levels are far lengthier than they are on other traditional arcade lightgun games, and there's the odd frame-rate stutter to be had here and there. Then there's the fact that gameplay can occasionally feel rather limiting with all that continuous shooting, but these are all very small issues.

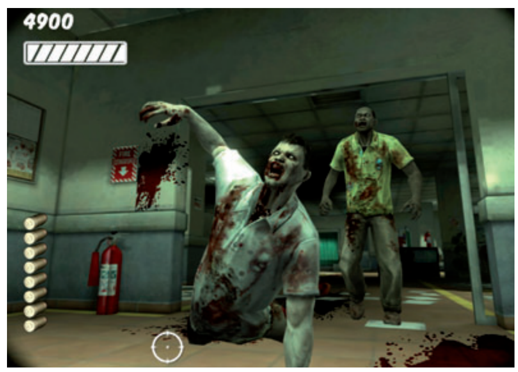
This is a great reboot of a classic Sega franchise and gives us real hope for future remakes.

» Scores

Presentation	90%
Graphics	82%
Sound	80%
Playability	88%
Addictivity	89%
Overall	**87%**



» It's a little known fact that all games featuring zombies must now have at least one hospital level in them.



OPINION



I love lightgun games, especially those made by Sega, but *OVERKILL* just doesn't cut it. The humour and style is funny, but the actual gameplay is very weak. The shooting is unsatisfying and feels more like clicking on a screen. Very poor.

Ashley Day

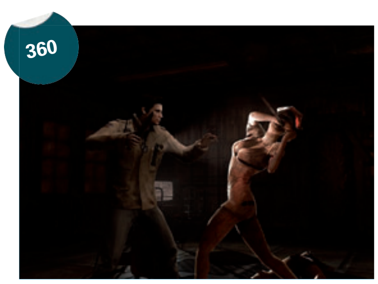


Pikmin

» **SYSTEM:** Wii
» **PRICE:** £29.99 » **PLAYERS:** 1-2

» **Wow. Call Nintendo's** New Play Control range cynical if you like, but it's all in the actual playing. *Pikmin* works brilliantly with the Wii's control system, with the remote and nunchuck making it amazingly intuitive and easy to get to grips with. It still has the steep difficulty curve of the original, and it's still not a patch on the superior sequel, but *Pikmin* does feel like a brand new experience. Roll on *Metroid Prime*.

» Score **85%**



Silent Hill: Homecoming

» **SYSTEM:** PS3, 360, PC
» **PRICE:** £39.99 » **PLAYERS:** 1

» **We've been avid** followers of Konami's twisted take on the survival over the last decade, so it's somewhat disappointing to report that *Homecoming* lacks the imagination of the brilliant original and its astounding follow-up. There's little sense of real danger this time around, while the shocks are few and far between.

» Score **69%**



De Blob

» **SYSTEM:** Wii
» **PRICE:** £34.99 » **PLAYERS:** 1-2

» **This has been** out for a while now, but it's so cheap that we implore you to pick it up. Similar in concept to odd classics like *Wizball* and *Skweek*, you're simply required to roll and jump around a monochrome world and restore its colour by defeating enemies and using the paint they drop to colour the town. It's ridiculously simple, but works really well due to the excellent controls and the sheer amount of humour.

» Score **84%**



PowerUp Forever

» **SYSTEM:** XBOX LIVE ARCADE
» **PRICE:** 800 POINTS » **PLAYERS:** 1

» **With so many** dual-stick shooters now available on the 360 and PSN, you need a special gimmick to stand out. *PowerUp Forever* certainly has one – shooting enough enemies summons a guardian, which when destroyed, evolves your ship – but it's just not enough to elevate this to the greatness of *Robotron*. Repetitiveness sets in and you're ultimately left with an incredibly pretty, but rather empty shoot-em-up.

» Score **51%**

» SEGA MEGA DRIVE ULTIMATE COLLECTION

RETRO GAMER SIZZLER

Sega Mega Drive Ultimate Collection

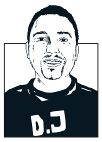
ULTIMATE BY NAME, ULTIMATE BY NATURE

INFORMATION

- » **FEATURED SYSTEM:** PLAYSTATION 3
- » **ALSO AVAILABLE ON:** XBOX 360
- » **RELEASED:** OUT NOW
- » **PRICE:** £29.99
- » **PUBLISHER:** SEGA
- » **DEVELOPER:** BACKBONE ENTERTAINMENT
- » **PLAYERS:** 1-2

BRIEF HISTORY

» Sega's Mega Drive was first released in Japan in 1989 and quickly went on to become Sega's most successful console. A massive success in the West, it's home to some fantastic games, ranging from *Sonic The Hedgehog* to a superb port of Capcom's *Strider*.



Okay, let's get the bad stuff out of the way first. The unlockable side of *Sonic & Knuckles* hasn't been included in this compilation – despite being in past compilations from Sega – while the sound on *Space Harrier* isn't arcade-authentic, despite it being so in past compilations. If that's something that's a real issue for you, then feel free to head on over to various forums where upset individuals are currently baying for Backbone Entertainment and Sega's blood, as you're not going to find any real negativity in this review. Mainly because we feel it's the best compilation we've played in the last five years, and let's face it, we've certainly reviewed our fair share in Retro Gamer.

Regular readers will no doubt remember that Sega's last Mega Drive collection scored a whopping 96% when we reviewed it in issue 31, and the more astute among you will no doubt realise that bar a few subtle changes in the games line-up – *Ecco Jr, Virtua Fighter II* and *Sword Of Vermillion* are nowhere to be seen – this new release features the same line-up but includes a further 16 Mega Drive games. This is indeed an ultimate collection of past hits, even if it isn't a fully complete one.

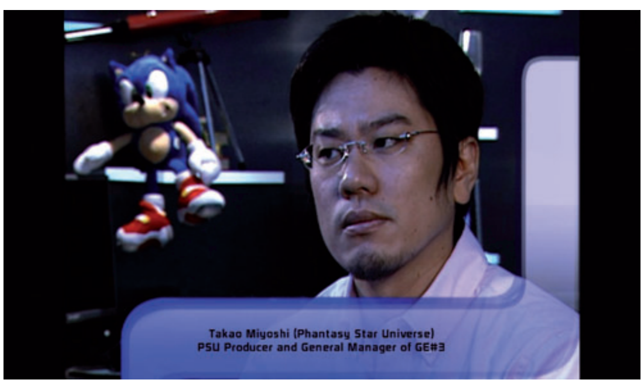
Sure, we could bemoan the fact that Sega's entire back catalogue of games – Mega Drive and otherwise – would probably fit on a single Blu-ray disc, but what's the point in that? Piracy and importing aside, this is the first time that many UK gamers will have been able to enjoy the likes of the *Streets Of Rage* trilogy and *Shining Force* games since their original outings, and while virtually the whole set of titles have appeared on past compilations, this is the first time they have been available as a collective whole.

And what an impressive haul it is. From the moment the disc loads up, you're treated to an excellent presentation that allows you to do everything from list games by the year they came out to

PS3



» Sega's *Street Of Rage 2* remains the greatest scrolling fighter of all time.



» There's a host of interesting interviews on this compilation. If only they all smiled a little more…

“This is quite simply the best value-for-money compilation that you can currently buy”

OPINION

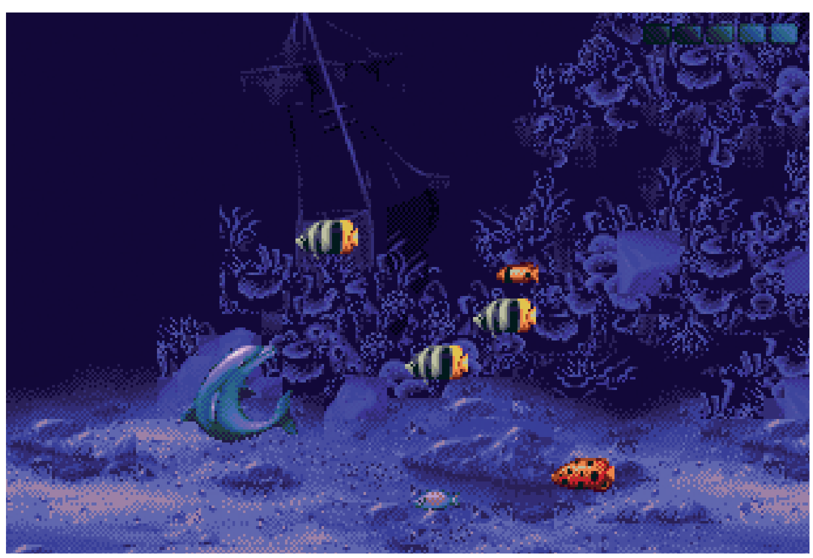


Wow. I was impressed with Backbone's PSP effort, but this is miles better. With so many people moaning about little gripes, it's easy to forget just how much these games would cost you in the wild. Truly, this is a great selection of classics to while away your time.

Stuart Hunt



» *Gain Ground* is a fantastic little shooter that never gets the recognition it deserves.



» Some of the achievements/trophies are rubbish. *Ecco: Tides of Time* requires you to eat 200 fish. Boring.

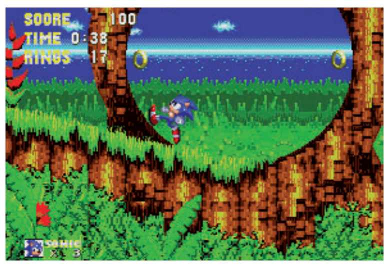


★ THE GAMES

The complete list of games and how we individually rate them

ALEX KIDD IN THE ENCHANTED CASTLE ★★★
ALIEN STORM ★★
ALTERED BEAST ★
BONANZA BROS ★★★★
COLUMNS ★★★
COMIX ZONE ★★★★
THE STORY OF THOR ★★★★
DECAP ATTACK ★★★★
DR ROBOTNIK'S MEAN BEAN MACHINE ★★★★
DYNAMITE HEADDY ★★★★
ESWAT: CITY UNDER SIEGE ★★★
ECCO THE DOLPHIN ★★★★
ECCO: THE TIDES OF TIME ★★★
FATAL LABYRINTH ★★★★
FLICKY ★★★★
GAIN GROUND ★★★★
GOLDEN AXE ★★★
GOLDEN AXE II ★★★
GOLDEN AXE III ★★★
KID CHAMELEON ★★★★
PHANTASY STAR II ★★★★
PHANTASY STAR III: GENERATIONS OF DOOM ★★★★
PHANTASY STAR IV: THE END OF THE MILLENNIUM ★★★★
RISTAR ★★★★
SHINING IN THE DARKNESS ★★★
SHINING FORCE ★★★★
SHINING FORCE II: ANCIENT SEALING ★★★★
SHINOBI III: RETURN OF THE NINJA MASTER ★★★★
SONIC 3D BLAST ★★★★
SONIC & KNUCKLES ★★★★
SONIC SPINBALL ★★★
SONIC THE HEDGEHOG ★★★★
SONIC THE HEDGEHOG 2 ★★★★★
SONIC THE HEDGEHOG 3 ★★★★
STREETS OF RAGE ★★★
STREETS OF RAGE 2 ★★★★★
STREETS OF RAGE 3 ★★★★
SUPER THUNDER BLADE ★
VECTORMAN ★★★★
VECTORMAN 2 ★★★

THE UNLOCKABLES:
ALIEN SYNDROME ★★★★
ALTERED BEAST ★★★★
CONGO BONGO ★★★★
FANTASY ZONE ★★★★
GOLDEN AXE WARRIOR ★★★★
PHANTASY STAR ★★★★
SHINOBI ★★★★★
SPACE HARRIER ★★★★★
ZAXXON ★★★★





viewing the requirements for unlocking the nine included arcade and Master System games. It's a bit bizarre why Sega has chosen US Genesis art to accompany each title, but this is otherwise impressive stuff, with interviews from various Sega developers and even the option of rating each game (we gave *Altered Beast* a single star out of five).

Of course, the real question that most of you are going to want to know is just how good the actual emulation is. Well we're happy to admit that the Mega Drive outings appear perfect (annoying *Sonic & Knuckles* mishap aside). In fact, to many UK gamers they may appear a little too perfect, as everything here is running at a solid 60HZ and not the 50 that PAL gamers were accustomed to when the console first came out. Options are admittedly limited compared to Sega's Japanese compendiums, but only the truly hardcore who use emulators on a daily basis will bemoan this anyway. Ignore the horrendous smoothing option (which thankfully never rears its ugly head unless you actively select it) and you're simply treated to some of the finest-looking sprites to ever grace the 16-bit period.

The Mega Drive boasted some lovely looking games and it's pleasing to see so many great titles have made the cut here. *Sonic The Hedgehog 2, Streets Of Rage 2, Dynamite Headdy, Ecco The Dolphin, Vectorman*; many of the included games still look absolutely fantastic and it's a credit to both the original designers and Backbone, that the included titles still look freaking awesome.

Arcade emulation, on the other hand, is a little more inconsistent. *Space Harrier*'s audio definitely sounds off and the wall ninjas from *Shinobi* have had their colours changed – most likely to avoid copyright issues – but everything else again appears to be perfect. Hits like *OutRun* and *After Burner* are conspicuous in their absence, but the included games are well worth taking the time to unlock, with *Shinobi, Alien Syndrome*, the aforementioned *Space Harrier* and *Phantasy Star* (one of two Master System games that have been included) being easily worth the £30 asking price alone.

Sega and Backbone really need to be commended for this fine compilation. Yes, it covers old ground, but never before have so many classic 16-bit Mega Drive games been gathered in a single place. With any luck, Sega and Backbone's excellent treatment will open the floodgates for similar compilations to appear in the future. This is quite simply the best value-for-money compilation your hard-earned cash can buy, and we only hope that many others publishers follow Sega's fine effort.

★ GO DEEPER

The facts behind Sega Mega Drive Ultimate Collection

» Backbone Entertainment resulted in a merger between Digital Eclipse and ImaginEngine.

» The *Streets of Rage* games were previously available on the Japanese version of the *Sonic Gems Collection*.

» Previous compilations that Backbone/Digital Eclipse have worked on include the *Capcom Classics Collection, Midway Arcade Treasures* series and the *Atari Anthology*.

★ WHY NOT TRY

▼ SOMETHING OLD
THE ORIGINAL GAMES (MEGADRIVE)



▽ SOMETHING NEW
SEGA MEGA DRIVE COLLECTION (PSP)



OPINION



Okay so this is weirdly missing a couple of classics and you can't link *Sonic & Knuckles* up to the older *Sonic* games, but I still like this collection. It's great value for money, as all of the carts alone would cost you hundreds of pounds.

Ashley Day

In a nutshell

A fantastic compilation that offers near-perfect emulation and a great range of games from Sega's most successful console. Unless you own the originals, you need to have this fantastic compilation in your 360 or PS3 collection. It's that simple.

» Scores

Presentation	94%
Graphics	96%
Sound	85%
Playability	98%
Addictivity	98%

Overall 98%

» R-TYPE DIMENSIONS



» The new hi-res visuals look absolutely beautiful. Note the lack of a smooth filter (Sega, we're looking at you).

★ GO DEEPER

The facts behind R-Type Dimensions

» The *R-Type* franchise consists of nine different games with the PSP release *R-Type Tactics* being the most recent.

» Impressed by Tozai Games' first published Live Arcade release? Then look out for the incoming *Lode Runner* as it boasts a similar makeover.

★ WHY NOT TRY

▼ SOMETHING OLD

R-TYPE DELTA (PLAYSTATION)



▽ SOMETHING NEW

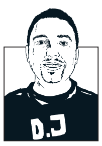
R-TYPE FINAL (PS2)





BOLDLY GOES WHERE NO R9 ARROWHEAD HAS GONE BEFORE

R-Type Dimensions



There's a reason why *R-Type* is generally considered to be one of the greatest shoot-'em-ups of all time. Now, some 22 years after that lone R9 Arrowhead first struck out at the evil Bydo Empire, the iconic ship is at it again. But this time it's brought a friend along for the ride.

Yes, indeedy, Irem's re-imagination of its most popular franchise not only boasts some truly gob-smackingly beautiful visuals, but also allows you to take on those Bydo scum with a friend, either online or in the comfort of your own home. It works brilliantly as well and feels as if it's always been a part of the actual franchise from its very conception. Yes, both games – *R-Type II* is included as well – remain as tough as ever, but that Bydo onslaught is so much easier with a friend at your side.

As fantastic as the new two-player mode is, we weren't quite as impressed with the new Infinite mode, which basically gives you an unlimited number of lives, lets you restart from whichever level you've completed and allows you to immediately carry on from wherever you've just died. We appreciate why this new mode has been included – the *R-Type*s can test even the most devoted shoot-'em-upper – but it's not something we'll be using on a regular basis. *R-Type Dimensions*' last new addition is more of an actual gimmick, but it's nevertheless one of the coolest features to ever appear in a videogame. Basically, a simple press of the Y button seamlessly switches you from the fantastic new high-definition visuals to the beautifully modelled sprites and pixels of the original game. It adds absolutely nothing to the way the game plays and yet it's such an ingenious idea we can't believe it's never been implemented before.

There is a caveat to all of this excellent blasting action, however. *R-Type Dimensions* is incredibly pricey in its current form. £10 is a fair amount to pay for a pair of games that have been converted numerous times before. On the other hand, though, we've not seen this much care and attention given to an Xbox Live Arcade game since *Street Fighter II Turbo HD Remix*. Basically, if you've ever loved *R-Type* you need *R-Type Dimensions*. It's that simple.

INFORMATION

- **FEATURED SYSTEM:** XBOX LIVE ARCADE
- **ALSO AVAILABLE ON:** N/A
- **RELEASED:** OUT NOW
- **PRICE:** 1,200 POINTS (£10)
- **PUBLISHER:** MICROSOFT
- **DEVELOPER:** TOZAI GAMES/ SOUTHEND INTERACTIVE
- **PLAYERS:** 1-2

BRIEF HISTORY

» *R-Type* first arrived in arcades in 1987 and became an instant hit thanks to its stunning level design, inventive bosses and impressive weapons. Known for its intense toughness, the game went on to spawn eight sequels, including *R-Type Delta* and *R-Type Leo*.

OPINION



This is the sort of retro upgrade I love to see. It's respectful to the original, while also offering optional extras like enhanced graphics and new ways to play. All these years on, *R-Type* is still one of the best shooters ever made so this is essential even if you're not a retro fan.

Ashley Day

In a nutshell

One of the greatest shooters of all time has been given a high-definition makeover that actually works. If you've ever loved the original, you owe it to yourself to play this one.

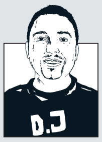
» Scores

Presentation	90%
Graphics	94%
Sound	88%
Playability	98%
Addictivity	92%
Overall	**94%**

Vector Tanks

WIREFRAME MAYHEM IN THE PALM OF YOUR HAND

» **SYSTEM:** IPHONE » **PRICE:** £1.79 » **GET IT FROM:** ITUNES



Peter Hirschberg is a genius. After finding a way to re-create *Adventure* on the iPhone, he's now back with a tremendous take on Atari's *Battlezone*.

Controls are brilliant, with your tank being controlled just like it was in the arcades. The only difference here is that instead of two gigantic controllers, your two tank treads can be seen on either side of the screen and you simply drag your thumbs backwards and forwards to go through a variety of different manoeuvres. It's a great system and shows how well old games can benefit from new technology.

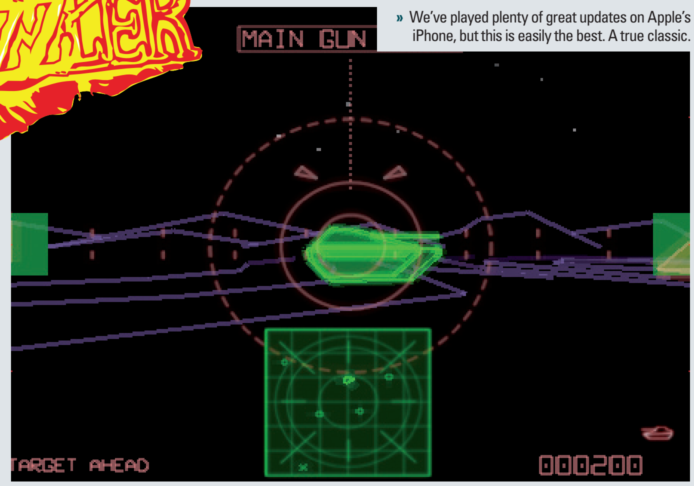
Graphics are also impressive, with a slick, old-school feel that will instantly transport you back to the early eighties – except *Battlezone* never moved at the speedy rate that *Vector Tank* manages. Sound is also impressive, with a wonderful sense of immersion if you go down the headphones route.

Where *Vector Tanks* differs from Atari's game though is the many new gameplay mechanics that Peter has included – the most impressive being a huge nuke and the excellent scoring system that allows you to crank out some decent scores after a bit of practice, based on the distance of your kills and destroying multiple targets.

The lack of an online leaderboard and multiplayer option feels like a bit of a missed opportunity, but this remains an astonishing effort that's a classic love letter to eighties gaming.

» Scores

Presentation	50%
Graphics	96%
Sound	75%
Playability	95%
Addictivity	97%
Overall	**91%**



» We've played plenty of great updates on Apple's iPhone, but this is easily the best. A true classic.



OPINION



Those of you who feel that the iPhone is not a relevant machine for retro fans need to play this amazing update. The stunning visuals, fantastic controls and great score mechanics all combine to create the best unofficial update of *Battlezone* that we've ever played.

Stuart Hunt

Chuck Norris: Bring The Pain

» **SYSTEM:** MOBILE (JAVA COMPATIBLE) » **PRICE:** £2+
» **GET IT FROM:** WWW.GAMELOFT.COM



» Now this is fun. Based on the same mould as *Contra*, this is a pretty solid run-and-gun that sees you taking control of the mighty Chuck Norris. While diagonals can be annoyingly tricky to hit, the actual gameplay is good entertainment, and it's pretty clear that creator Gameloft ensured that its tongue was firmly embedded within Norris's cheek. There are a nice variety of weapons to use, enemies come at you thick and fast and there's even the option to pick up vehicles and use them as weapons. Good clean silly fun.

» Score **79%**

Pac-Man Pinball 2

» **SYSTEM:** MOBILE (JAVA COMPATIBLE) » **PRICE:** £2+
» **GET IT FROM:** WWW.NAMCOMOBILE.COM



» After being suitably impressed with *Pac-Man's* latest mobile phone outing, it also turns out that he's a dab hand at pinball as well. Featuring brilliantly responsive controls, three different tables to choose from and some very convincing ball physics, this is a very solid little pinball game that plays like a proverbial dream and proves that it's perfectly possible to get great games for your phone. Challenges and extra tables would have been nice, but this is a huge improvement over the already good original and well worth downloading.

» Score **86%**

Silent Hill: The Escape

» **SYSTEM:** IPHONE » **PRICE:** £3.49
» **GET IT FROM:** ITUNES

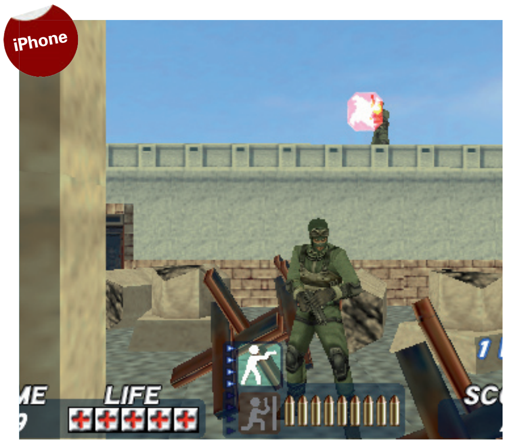


» It was always going to be impossible for Konami to replicate the original *Silent Hill* experience on a device like the iPhone, so it's looked to the past for inspiration. *Silent Hill: The Escape* is to all intents and purposes a re-imagining of *3D Monster Maze*. Gameplay is pretty simplistic, requiring you to do little more than race around each stage looking for the key to unlock the next area, but the labyrinth-like structure and tremendous graphics and sound do make *The Escape* a pretty claustrophobic and terrifying experience.

» Score **78%**

Time Crisis Strike

» **SYSTEM:** IPHONE » **PRICE:** £3.49
» **GET IT FROM:** ITUNES



» **Namco is certainly** doing the business on its back catalogue, with *Time Crisis Strike* being another great game to receive a perfectly acceptable port. You tap the screen to shoot, while tilting the iPhone to hide behind cover and reload. It's a great system that works really well. The aesthetics are also of a high standard, with the graphics in particular being very polished and mimicking the look of *Time Crisis 2*. Add in a selection of different gameplay modes and *Time Crisis Strike* proves to be another essential addition to your iPhone library.

» Score **85%**



Wild West Guns

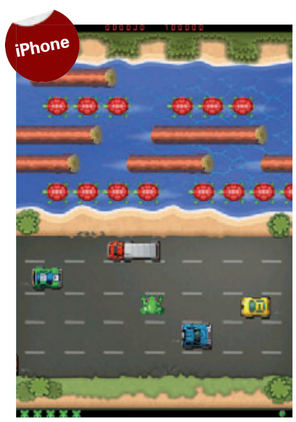
» **SYSTEM:** IPHONE » **PRICE:** £2.99
» **GET IT FROM:** ITUNES

» **Gameloft has been** delivering some excellent apps for Apple's machine, and this is another solid effort. Effectively a Wild West take on Namco's popular *Point Blank* series, this is nothing more than an excellent collection of lightgun mini-games. One minute you're keeping tin cans up in the air for a set amount of time, the next you're shooting down a required number of sombreros or defeating a horde of train-robbing bandits. The action comes thick and fast, the visuals look great and there are plenty of levels and modes to unlock. Excellent stuff.

» Score **88%**

Frogger

» **SYSTEM:** IPHONE » **PRICE:** £2.39
» **GET IT FROM:** ITUNES



» **This is Konami's** first port of one of its old franchises, and for a debut this is pretty good stuff. It would have been nice to have the old style visuals, but the new look is clean, well detailed and a solid enough homage to the arcade original. Controls on the other hand are something of an issue, with only the slide option offering you any real degree of control. It's an adequate enough port, but when you consider what bedroom coders are achieving on the system, *Frogger* does feel a little lazy. One for hardcore *Frogger* fans only we're afraid.

» Score **63%**

Pinball Dreams

retro GAMER SIZZLER

» **SYSTEM:** IPHONE » **PRICE:** £3.49
» **GET IT FROM:** ITUNES



» **Remember the Amiga's** excellent *Pinball Dreams*? Well it's now available on Apple's iPhone and is just as good as it ever was. Retaining the original graphics – although there's a new high-res sheen if you want it – the first thing that hits you is just how good the tables still are. Physics are spot on, there's plenty of ways of amassing huge scores and you can play the game either vertically or horizontally. In fact, the only thing that's disappointing is the lack of an online leaderboard – otherwise this is an essential download.

» Score **90%**

CHATTER BOX

» With so many coders making classic games on the iPhone, we thought we'd take a more in-depth look at some of the more impressive ones. This month **Carl Loodberg** discusses *Labyrinth*...



Retro Gamer: Why choose *Labyrinth* as your first iphone game?
Carl Loodberg: It started as a tech demo because I loved playing the game at my grandparents as a kid. It turned out that the large screen and quick accelerometer were perfect for the game, and the initial public beta generated great feedback.

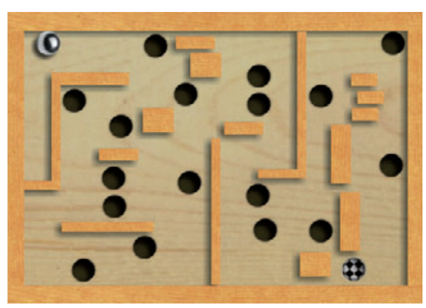
RG: How long did it take to create?
CL: It has been an iterative process over one and a half years, so it is hard to give an exact answer. Probably about one man-year I would think.

RG: What do you think about *Labyrinth's* clones?
CL: There have been quite a few clones of *Labyrinth* on the App Store, but none of them have put as much effort into creating such a great physics simulation as we have. Many people say they think *Labyrinth* is a simple game, but under the hood there has been a lot of work to get the feel just right.

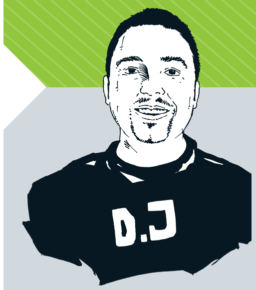
RG: How important do you think the lite versions of games are?
CL: For a new player a lite version is very important to spread the word. With *Labyrinth*, for example, it was very important. For *Touchgrind* we have not made a lite version since we already have a good reputation among the consumers.

RG: Why do you think there's so much interest in retro games on the system?
CL: I think people like games they recognise from old platforms. That being said, I feel it is very important to see what the platform is good for and building the game from that. Just pouring old code and placing on-screen buttons rarely produces good results.

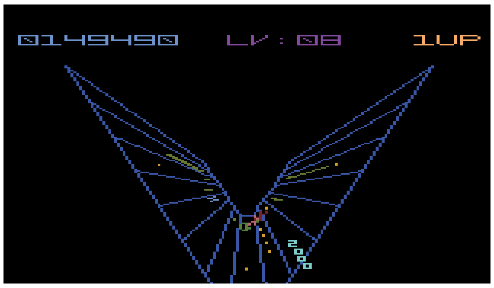
RG: What are the best games you've played on the iPhone so far?
CL: I like *Rolando* quite a lot, probably because it feels like it was built for the iPhone and it's not an actual port.



» The scene's latest news and reviews



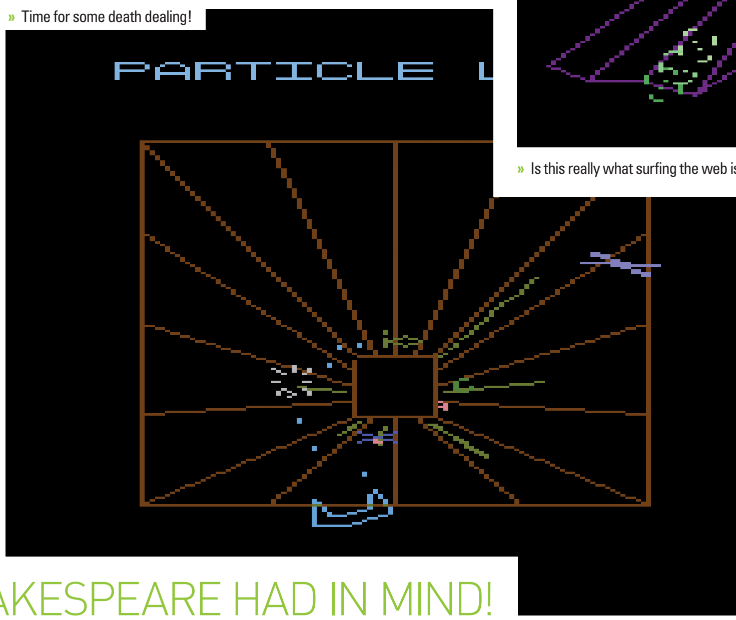
Welcome to another issue of **Retro Gamer** that's jam-packed with all the latest homebrew games. Jason Kelk has been looking at a fantastic version of Tempest for the Atari 8-bits, while Stuart and myself have been having arguments as to who is best at Boulder Rock! 3D (we bet you can't guess what that's a remake of…). Last but by no means least is a catch up with Ovine's Stu Collier



» Time for some death dealing!



» Is this really what surfing the web is like?

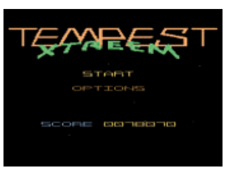




» Taking a trip through time and space.

NOT WHAT SHAKESPEARE HAD IN MIND!

TEMPEST XTREEM



FORMAT: ATARI 8-BIT
DEVELOPED BY: ATLANTIS GAMES GROUP
LINK: HTTP://MEMBERS.TCQ.NET/VIDEO61/TEMPEST1.HTML
RELEASE DATE: 2009
PRICE: $49.95 (EXCLUDING P&P)
REVIEWED BY: JASON KELK

David Theurer's original coin-op version of *Tempest* is a superb piece of minimalist shoot-'em-up action; the gameplay takes place within a tube that has the player's claw-like spacecraft balanced precariously on the near edge and assorted nasties materialising at the far one. These assailants crawl towards the claw, intent on either blowing it up or grabbing hold and legging it off into the distance; the claw's job is to lay waste to anything that isn't the tube itself and, if things get really desperate, the superzapper can be used once a level to destroy everything. Jeff Minter later took that base and built his Jaguar triumph *Tempest 2000* around it, introducing power-up weapons, psychedelic visuals and bonus stages without breaking the core gameplay in the process.

And surprisingly, *Tempest Xtreem* isn't a straight conversion of *Tempest* and is instead a moderately brave attempt at taking the major elements of Minter's remix and squeezing until most of it fits inside an 8-bit. A truly commendable job has been done, too; the action is fast and furious, power-ups such as the AI support drone (a cube that patrols the rim of the tube with the player, firing into the fray) and particle laser have all been brought over to this version, and even the inter-level warps are present, flights through tunnels of rings that are suspended in space, which earn the player a score bonus and skip forwards a couple of levels.

Since the in-game graphics are mostly vectors, they do suffer a little from the Atari's lower resolution, but are still colourful and the action is never obscured, which is very important for such a frenetic game. One major cosmetic highlight simply has to be the soundtrack, a detailed pokey rendition of the music from *Tempest 2000* is accompanied by conversions of the in-game sound effects, and even some of the speech samples from the Jaguar, which play for events such as when the superzapper is recharged between stages or a power-up that activates the inter-level warp is collected. It isn't entirely perfect, however. For a start, the difficulty level has been set to somewhere around the 'eek!' end of the scale from very early on and the control system is a touch more sensitive than it really should have been, so precise positioning of the claw to take out Flippers that are crawling around the edge of the tube is, while still possible, significantly harder than with either predecessor.

Although there is an unreleased prototype of *Tempest* in existence for the Atari 5200 console, its sister machines in the home computer line have never seen a decent version of the game so this beefed-up rendition is certainly something to get excited about for Atari owners; it's a slightly flawed masterpiece perhaps, and some options for mouse or paddle controllers (or a sensitivity setting for the joystick) wouldn't have gone amiss, but for any hardcore *Tempest* or indeed shoot-'em-up fan, it's worth at downloading the preview of *Xtreem* to see if the cartridge itself warrants the price tag.

90%

BABLE BABLE

REVIEWED BY: JASON KELK

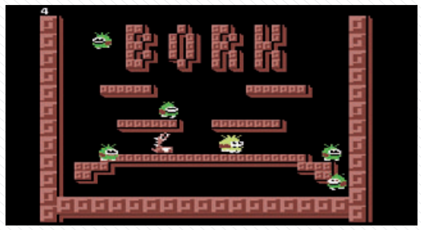
» **FORMAT:** COMMODORE 64 » **DEVELOPER:** SWEDISH CHEF OF F.S.T.
» **DOWNLOAD:** HTTP://NONAME.C64.ORG/CSDB/RELEASE/?ID=75518

Anybody who has ever wondered what the dinosaurs in *Bubble Bobble* are doing to produce bubbles may now have an answer in the form of *Bable Bable* – they're burping! The player's pink dinosaur sidles up to a nasty and disgorges stomach gasses; the attackers run away each time this happens, but giving one enough doses causes it to plummet from the screen and the level is complete when only the dino is left standing.

Bable Bable has only the one attacker, no scoring or bonuses and not a single bubble in sight and, short of incorporating a fart mega-weapon, is about as immature as gaming gets; so, of course, I loved the thing, and issuing sampled burps at attackers has raised plenty of childish grins. *Bable Bable* has been well executed and, while it can't hold attention for long due to the finite number of screens and assailants, in the short term it can be enjoyed if the player is amused by burping.

76%





» Not exactly *Gone With The Wind*, but close!

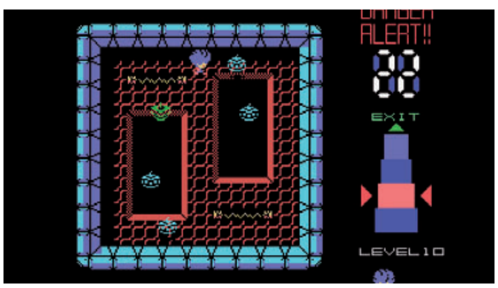
DANGER TOWER

REVIEWED BY: JASON KELK

» **FORMAT:** MSX » **DEVELOPER:** DANGER TEAM
» **DOWNLOAD:** HTTP://MSXDEV.MSXBLUE.COM/



» Danger danger, high voltage!



The Danger Tower. 15 floors of holographic security devices, which, since you've just lifted the huge diamond they were protecting, are out to get you; these guardians come in four flavours, which either move in a fixed direction and bounce off obstacles or follow the player's movement. Fortunately, you're a well-equipped burglar and have some hardware that can neutralise these defences, the only caveat being it takes 60 seconds to charge, which means that you'll be spending a minute unprotected while waiting for it to kick in!

Whilst it's enjoyable to play, *Danger Tower* also comes perilously close to being frustrating; the early screens are easy enough and there's even a hiding place on the second, but the addition of electrified walls and holes that drop the player into the previous floor make things significantly harder. Passing through 15 levels doesn't sound taxing, but that high difficulty curve won't suit everybody and gamers who do stick with it are guaranteed to be screaming at their televisions well before the end.

82%

DEMOMANIA

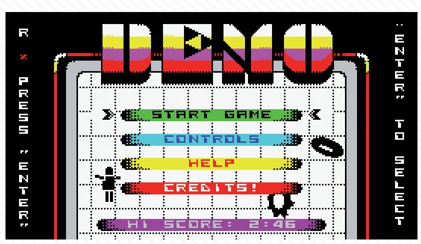
REVIEWED BY: JASON KELK

» **FORMAT:** 128K SPECTRUM » **DEVELOPER:** TRIEBKRAFT, 4TH DIMENSION AND OLLY BFOX » **DOWNLOAD:** HTTP://POUET.NET/PROD.PHP?WHICH=52542

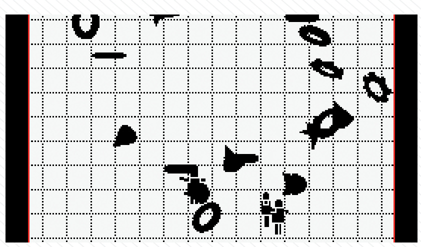
Although the title might suggest otherwise, *DemoMania* is a game with the name coming from the assortment of demo-related shapes that bowl down the screen during play. The player is kitted out with an *Arkanoid*-style bat (positioned near the bottom of the play area and moved horizontally with either keyboard or Kempston mouse control), their duty being to prevent objects disappearing off the bottom of the screen by deflecting them upwards; missing one decreases a health bar on the status panel and, when it's empty, the game is over.

That's everything, really. The bat is pleasantly drawn, all of the pre-rendered animations of tori, cones and other mostly geometric shapes that tumble past are nice and reasonably detailed considering their size and, as the game goes on, more objects are introduced and begin to fall faster. *DemoMania* is a pretty shallow experience, but is fun in small doses.

62%

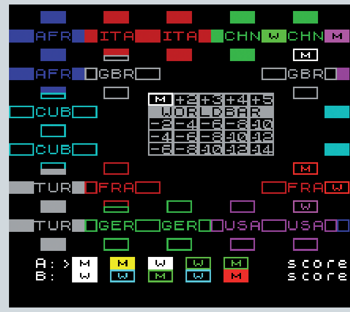


» It almost looks like a demo.



WHAT'S BREWING?

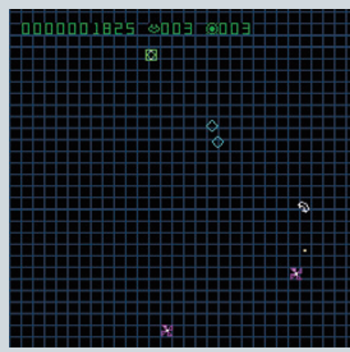
All the latest news from the homebrew community



» *World Bar,* just one of many competition entries.

» They get smaller every year...

The 2009 Minigame Competition was launched at the beginning of February; Minigame is a multi-platform, 8-bit programming competition originally born from a huge discussion about which 8-bit was best on the internet. The challenge is to push as much game as possible into a tiny amount of space, with the categories being 1K, 2K and 4K. More information and previous entries are available at **www.MiniGameComp.org.uk**.



» It's like *Geometry Wars,* but on an 8-bit computer.

» Been in the Wars

Along with the review of *Tempest Xtreem* this issue comes news of another attempt to cram a vector-based shooter into an 8-bit; *Galaxy NES* is a *Geometry Wars*-inspired blaster for the NES already released as a preview, and although the controls need a little work and it's currently mute, it looks very promising indeed. The preview and ongoing discussion can be found at **http://nesdev.parodius.com/bbs/viewtopic.php?t=4842**.

» It's just a jump to the left

Originally written for the Commodore PET by our own Jason Kelk back in 2008, *Blok Copy* is a puzzle game where a collection of tiles are randomly scrambled and the original layout must then be restored. A new version for modified version 2 or 3 C64DTV units (with other C64-related conversions to follow) is close to completion so an announcement should appear at **www.cosine.org.uk** soon.

HOMEBREW

» The scene's latest news and reviews

WHAT'S BREWING?

All the latest news from the homebrew community

» We are the pigs

Recently covered in issue 61 of **Retro Gamer**, it would appear that one of Stuart's favourite 8-bit games is going to be getting a brand new remake. It's currently in its very early stages and so far only has a single player mode in place currently in place, although (name here) has already revealed on Retro Remakes that he's currently working on the multiplayer aspect. No news as to when the project will be finally completed, but if Stuart has his way, it will be appearing in a future issue very, very soon.



» Look at this. How can you not be excited by it?

» The great SAUG

If you're a keen Amiga owner and live up in Scotland, you may be interested to hear about the new Scottish Amiga User Group that's just been set up for anyone living north of the border. SAUG is a new website and forum for like-minded individuals to get together, and hopes to be organising events, podcasts and other goodies in the very near future. You can get more information by signing up to their website at **http://scottishamiga.webs.com/**.

FLASH BOREDOM



Want to know how to while away those boring office hours? Then don't miss out on **Retro Gamer**'s Flash game of the month. This month we look at ***Heavy Metal Girl***

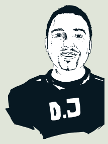
WE'VE PLAYED PLENTY of single-screen platformers in our time, but never have we seen one where you control a cute roller-skating blonde, who takes out opponents with heavy metal riffs. *Heavy Metal Girl* features a cool little combo system that allows you to clock up some insane scores. Check it out at **www.flash-game.net/game/1844/heavy-metal-girl.html**.

REMAKES WE'VE BEEN PLAYING...



HORACE GOES SKIING

» **DOWNLOAD:** WWW.SPACETIMEGAMES.CO.UK



There have been countless remakes of Melbourne House's 8-bit classic, but here's another great effort. While the controls take a while to get used to, it's not long before you're racing back and forth across the hectic street and heading to the ski slope. This is where this remake really excels, as the controls are extremely tight and responsive here, allowing you to easily weave among the many obstacles that are thrown towards you.

Aside from its enhanced visuals, this update adds no gameplay improvements, although many readers will no doubt argue that any significant changes were needed anyway. This is simply a 27-year-old game that's been giving a smashing lick of funky new paint.



TRANZ AM

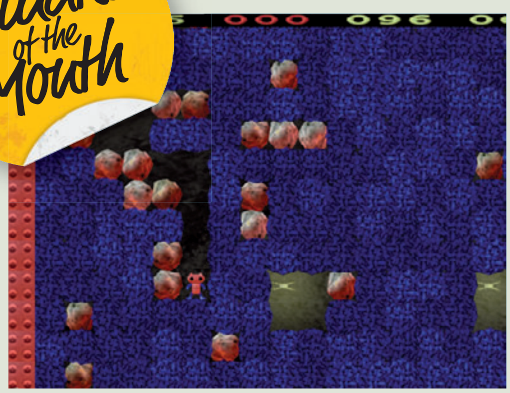
» **DOWNLOAD:** WWW.CLASSIC-RETRO-GAMES.COM/TRANZ-AM_425.HTML

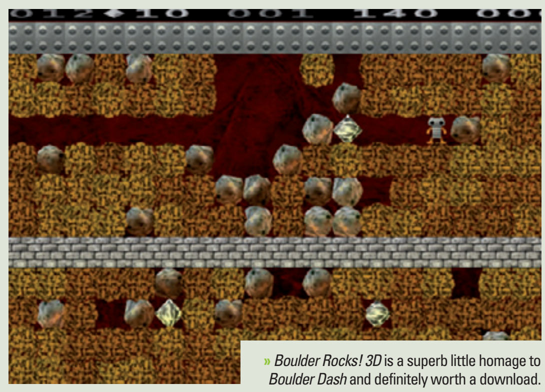


We briefly mentioned Mick Farrow's fun remake of Ultimate's 1983 Speccy hit last issue, but now we've had a little more time to get to grips with it so were keen to share our thoughts with you.

For those who've never played Ultimate's game before, you're required to simply race around the USA collecting trophies and avoid enemy racers. Annoyingly, you only have a set amount of fuel available, so you'll need to keep driving over the petrol stations that are liberally dotted around the huge playing area in order to keep your tank full. It's rather easy, but we still found Mick's remake really enjoyable stuff. With so many of Ultimate's more popular titles getting constantly remade, it's refreshing to play something a little different.

Remake of the Month

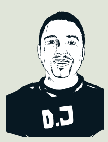




» *Boulder Rocks! 3D* is a superb little homage to *Boulder Dash* and definitely worth a download.

BOULDER ROCKS! 3D

» **DOWNLOAD:** HTTP://GAD.ART.PL/DOWNLOAD.PHP

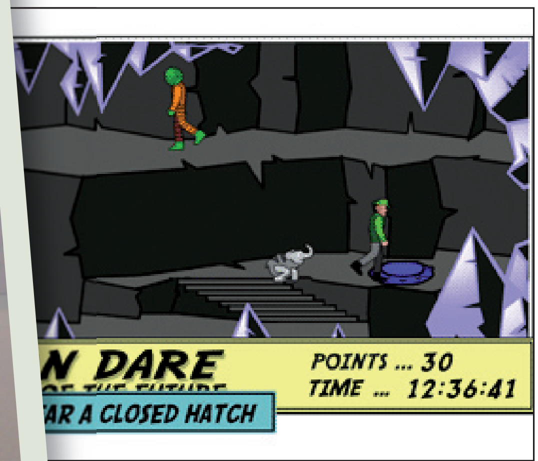


"But *Boulderdash* has been remade to death," we hear you cry. Ah, but not with as much skill and polish as what's on offer here. Zombie Mastah's remake is excellent and features a wealth of nifty additions that greatly adds to *Boulder Rocks! 3D*'s overall appeal. You can change the fluidity of Rockford's movement, switch between new and old-school graphics, turn particle effects on or off, as well as choosing which caves and levels you start on. It's a real comprehensive little package that shows just how much care and attention has been put into the overall remake.

The new graphics aren't exactly astonishing, but they serve their purpose perfectly. And besides, it was the gameplay that was always important in the original 8-bit versions, and the frantic digging of old has been captured perfectly. While everything starts off relatively simply, later stages can be a real mindbender and really require you to put the old noggin into work before you successfully complete them.

Don't be put off by the basic-looking visuals, as this is a cracking reworking of a cult favourite and should be downloaded immediately by anyone who ever had a care for the original. Just remember to click on the English flag when you first visit Zombie Mastah's site, otherwise you'll find that everything's in Polish.









» **Above:** If you're a fan of the original *Dan Dare* then be sure to check out Ovine Design's excellent remake. » **Top Right:** Regular readers of **Retro Gamer** will remember that we did a diary on Stu's update of *Driller*. Needless to say the finished product is excellent, so check it out by visiting **www.ovine.net**. » **Right:** *Jet Set Willy Online* is just that. It also happens to be utterly fantastic and definitely worth playing, providing you can find enough people to actually join you.

HOMEBREW HEROES

AFTER FEATURING TREVOR STOREY IN ISSUE 60, IT SEEMED ONLY FAIR TO CHAT TO HIS COLLABORATOR **STUART COLLIER**, THE MAN RESPONSIBLE FOR JET SET WILLY ONLINE AND MANY OTHERS

Retro Gamer: So Stu, when did you first learn to start coding?
Stuart Collier: I started to code when I had a Vic-20, which was in Nineteen Eighty errrr… Well, let's just say it was a very long time ago when I first started to learn basic. I loved typing in magazine-published code, but always wanted to create my own. After poly I pursued a career in database coding (bah, I should have chose games writing), and some 20 years later I'm now an IT manager of an engineering company.

RG: So what's your preferred language of choice?
SC: My weapon of choice is BlitzMax. It's a very easy language to use. I have built up a framework that means I don't have to keep reinventing code every time I work on a new remake. It does have OOP capabilities, but if that scares you, you're not forced to use it.

RG: Why do you prefer to work on remakes as opposed to new games?
SC: I think it has to be that remakes take considerably less time to complete than an original creation. You have an instant finish line knowing what has to go into the game and how everything works. Picking a favourite remake also means that you are highly motivated as you loved the original so much. I also like the idea of solving the same problems that the original programmer came across (although I must say it's much easier these days – kudos to them).

RG: How did you get into contact with Trevor Storey?
SC: When I was doing Cholo, my first step into 3D coding, I contacted Trevor via the Retro Remakes forum. "Can you do a few robots for me..?" which turned into the entire games models – how cheeky was I? The next few remakes were done with AndyH, but real life took Andy away from the remake scene but I was itching to do more so I contacted Trevor again and the rest, as they say, is history.

RG: Why did you decide to co-start Ovine By Design?
SC: AndyH and I have been friends for quite a while, and after a whole year of playing Anarchy Online, we got the itch to start games programming rather than just playing them. I tried to join another well-known retro group but was refused (I'm bitter, aren't I?) so the next best thing was to simply start our own group. Ovine was born.

RG: Why do you think there is such an interest in homebrew coding still?
SC: I think there are still a lot of creative people out there that want to produce games. For those lucky enough to come up with something special, there's always the lure of a little bit of cash or they might get noticed by a games publisher/development house – I'm still actually waiting.

RG: What remakes would you still like to see?
SC: There are still loads of great remakes left for people to do. Personally, I'd like to see *Hammerfist*, *Glider Rider*, *Action Biker* (aka *Clumsy Colin*), *Stunt Car Racer*, *Trapdoor*, *Druid* – shall I go on ?

RG: Can we expect to ever see a similar release to *Jet Set Willy Online*?
SC: I do hope so. We have a planned JSWOL 3.1 soon, which boasts smoother lag prediction and a level editor that allows you to create and upload your own levels with others to play online. If someone has any good ideas, then we'll certainly consider them.

RG: How much of your free time do you spend working on remakes?
SC: Having a three-year old means I have little time these days. If I do sit down while he is around he is on my lap asking "Whack-A-Monty-Mole please daddy". So I get on about ten at night and dependant on how motivated and tired I am I normally manage two to three hours. I do have the odd hour on the laptop when there's nothing on the telly, but that's about it.

RG: So what game are you hoping to finish off next?
SC: Smila and I have returned back to our MYTH remake. Currently, we are testing levels 1-5 (which is about 80% of the levels). Graphically, it's going to be one of the best remakes we have done. The original was special, but ours is even more so (even if I do say so myself).

HIGH FIVE
The homebrew games Stuart can't live without

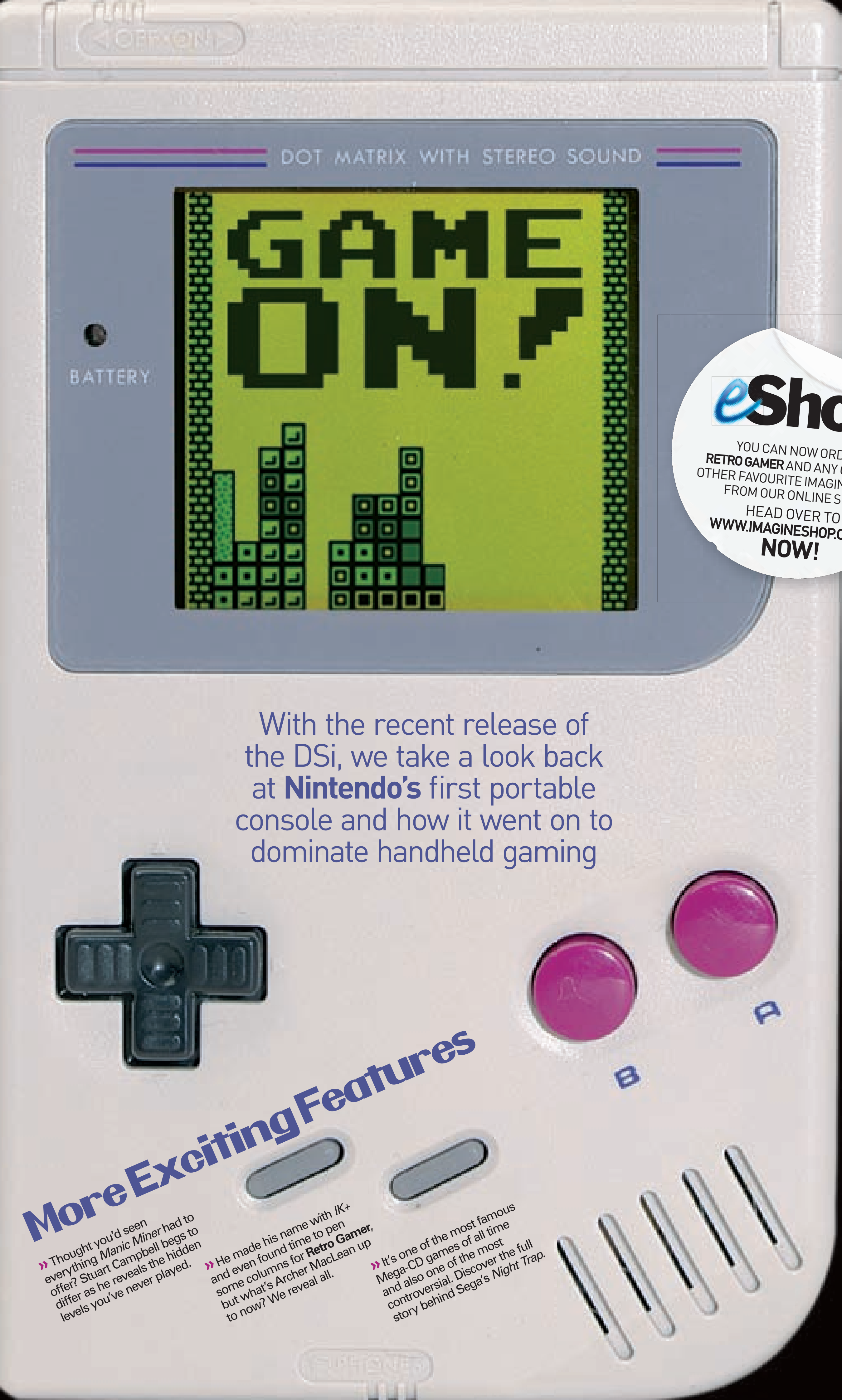
1. **Progress Quest:** Seeing I have zero time for a MMORG these days, this is the next best thing. It really takes the stress out of levelling.
2. **Imogen:** Although an older remake of ours, it still cracks me up and I still find it relaxing to this day.
3. **Cave Story:** We all strive to get as good a game as this. Addictive, addictive, addictive!
4. **Head Over Heels:** Beautiful graphics and faithful game play make this a dream to play through.
5. **Starstrike 3D:** It's completely immersing with excellent graphics and smooth game play. It might have taken Andy Nixon a fair while to finish but totally worth it.

retro GAMER

NEXT ISSUE

LOAD 63

ON SALE 23 APRIL 2009



GAME ON!

With the recent release of the DSi, we take a look back at **Nintendo's** first portable console and how it went on to dominate handheld gaming

More Exciting Features

» Thought you'd seen everything *Manic Miner* had to offer? Stuart Campbell begs to differ as he reveals the hidden levels you've never played.

» He made his name with *IK+* and even found time to pen some columns for **Retro Gamer**, but what's Archer MacLean up to now? We reveal all.

» It's one of the most famous Mega-CD games of all time and also one of the most controversial. Discover the full story behind Sega's *Night Trap*.

RETRO DIRECTORY

EVERY MONTH, RETRO GAMER WILL BE LISTING ITS FAVOURITE WEBSITES AND INTERVIEWING SOME OF THEIR KEY MEMBERS. THIS MONTH WE SPEAK TO THE FANTASTIC SHANE MONROE – OWNER AND FOUNDER OF THE WONDERFULLY NOSTALGIC RETROGAMING RADIO – ABOUT HIS SITE AND THE STATE OF RETRO GAMING TODAY



RG: Retro Gamer: Why did you set up Retrogaming Radio?

Shane Monroe: In 1995, there were no podcasts, no radio shows – just news sites. I realised I wanted to share my passion of classic gaming in a way that was infectious and it was the medium of audio that I found successful in doing that.

RG: Why do you think the site has proven to be so popular?

SM: To sound clichéd, it's about keeping it real. No sponsors, no bias (other than my own). I don't have to watch who I piss off. It's about keeping it raw – no big production values, no fakery. Just passion. People tire of journalists kissing the ass of publishers and deciding the fate of gaming. They want someone from the same trenches that they are in to give them a perspective on something near and dear to them. Nostalgia can be a powerful thing.

RG: So what gives you the edge over similar websites/podcasts?

SM: My radio shows aren't about giving lip service or getting as many four-letter expletives into a time frame as possible. Passion is contagious – and there is such a lack of pure passion these days that people will happily listen and love it – even if they disagree with what I have to say. For example, my passionate bashing of the beloved *Chrono Trigger* is still the most popular episode of the show to date.

> "THEY WANT SOMEONE TO GIVE THEM A PERSPECTIVE ON SOMETHING NEAR AND DEAR TO THEM"

RG: What would you say is the most popular part of your website?

SM: Probably our discussion forums. We have a lot of good people there – smart people – people from and in the industry and other like-minded, passionate people. We can all get along and make nice – even when we disagree (and we do – often).

RG: How can our readers contribute?

SM: Get involved with the forums. Don't be a lurker – get into the conversation.

RG: You tend to cover certain newer games along with the classics, how do you define what is relevant?

SM: Just like today, there are *tons* of horrible games from the Seventies and Eighties. 'Classic' (as in 'great' not as in 'old') games have a formula that makes them timeless – still playable today. There are some modern games that still have soul – that still have that 'formula' that makes it appeal to people that loved the 'classic' games of the past. I want to make sure that people get a chance to see and play these 'modern classic' style games because there *are* gems to be found in the wild – people need to be exposed to them.

RG: What's your favourite videogame of all time and why?

SM: For me, I think I have a favourite 'type' of game more than I have a favourite game. I am all about greed and risk along with the 'gotta play one more' addictive quality. Basically games that reward you for your greed – and punish you harshly if you make a mistake. For example, classic games such as *Robotron* and *Zookeeper* are about greed. Modern games such as *Geometry Wars* are about greed. *Pac-Man Championship Edition* on the Xbox Live Arcade is about greed. Too few games care about 'score' any more – it's all about 'finishing the quest' and not about 'playing just one more time'.

With that in mind, I can tell you that the two games I've played the most throughout my life have been *Robotron* and *Mr. Do!* (both arcade versions). Thanks to MAME for keeping these games alive for me!

DEEPER LOOK – WEBSITE OF THE MONTH

Retrogaming Radio
www.retrogamingradio.com



There are many things we could say about Retrogaming Radio's frontman Shane Munroe. We could call him loud, we could call him outspoken, but above all he's passionate about videogames and has been doing this podcast lark far longer than all his young upstart peers. He has a vast knowledge, and a genuine love of games, which is why we tend to listen to him every month. His website is a similar place, with a lot of people who are prepared to put their views across, but are always willing to listen to newcomers who stumble across Retrogaming Radio's friendly forums. Basically, if you have a love for retro and classic games then you need to bookmark this site as quickly as possible.

THE RETRO GAMER DIRECTORY

ATARI AGE
www.atariage.com
Excellent site dedicated to all aspects of Atari gaming.

ATARI ORG
www.atari.org
Another Atari site with every machine since the 2600.

AUSSIE ARCADE
www.aussiearcade.com.au
A fantastic arcade forum catering for an Aussie audience.

CPC ZONE
www.cpczone.net
Great site for the Amstrad range of computers.

C64 GAME ENDINGS
www.c64endings.co.uk/
Over 260 endings for classic and not so classic C64 games.

LEMON64
www.lemon64.com
Superb Commodore 64 site filled with insightful reviews and a friendly forum.

LEMON AMIGA
www.lemonamiga.com
This great Amiga site is run by Kim Lemon, owner of Lemon 64.

MACRETRO
www.macretro.tk
Getting emulators up and running on the Mac, this is a brilliant site.

NEO-GEO.COM
www.neo-geo.com
Dedicated to SNK's systems, but with lots of other stuff to enjoy.

WEEKEND GAMER
www.weekend-gamer.co.uk
Great site that covers a range of topics, from TV to gaming.

SYSTEM16
www.system16.com
Sega focused, but also covers arcade games.

GAMES THAT WEREN'T
http://gtw64.retro-net.de/
Where cancelled C64 games get discovered.

NTSC-UK
http://ntsc-uk.domino.org/
This site is devoted to imports, but there's a retro section, too.

OLD-COMPUTERS.COM
http://old-computers.com
If you think the 2600 is ancient, visit this fascinating site.

RETRO MUSEUM
www.retrocomputermuseum.co.uk
This site will soon be an actual physical place you can visit.

RACKET BOY
http://racketboy.com/
There's a definite Sega slant to Racket Boy, but it's a lot of fun.

RADIO SEGA
www.radiosega.net
If you're a fan of Sega music you'll love Radio Sega.

SEGA-16.COM
www.sega-16.com
Mega Drive site with some incredibly in-depth interviews.

RETRO 101
www.retro101.co.uk
It's fairly new, but Retro 101 has some informative articles.

RETRO GAMING RADIO
www.monroeworld.com
Superb monthly podcast that looks at the US game market.

RLLMUK FORUM
www.rllmukforum.com/index.php
All the latest games and a retro section with helpful members.

THE RUBBER BEERMAT
http://myweb.tiscali.co.uk/themanor33/TRBv2/
Excellent Spectrum site that champions a lot of rare games.

SCOTTISH AMIGA USER GROUP
http://scottishamiga.webs.com/
Newly formed site for Scottish Amiga fans.

SHOOT THE CORE
www.shootthecore.moonpod.com
This brilliant site loves shmups of all descriptions.

SHMUPS
www.shmups.com
Amazing website dedicated to the shoot-'em-up genre.

VIDEOGAME MUSEUM
www.vgmuseum.com
Screenshots, game endings, cover scans, and reviews.

THE VIRTUAL CONSOLE ARCHIVE
www.vc-reviews.com
Everything VC-related.

WORLD OF SPECTRUM
www.worldofspectrum.org
Superb Spectrum site that offers a friendly forum.

GAMESTYLE
www.gamestyle.net
Long-standing website that now includes retro articles.

If you want to add your website to our expanding directory, please contact Darran at **darran.jones@imagine-publishing.co.uk**

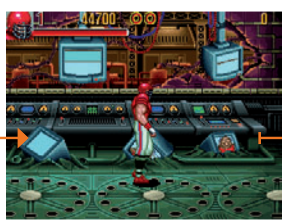


KNUCKLE BASH

Knuckle Bash is a bizarre brawler starring a cast of wrestling superstar types that resemble old celebrities. They're on a mission to bring down an evil crime organisation called Bull Group, and also hope to spread a nice message to every kid who ever aspired to one day get paid to play fight with hairy angry men in their tights.



SCREEN 1
Our wrestling heroes have fought through an unsafe hotel lobby and a dangerous marina to get to the top of this treacherous dojo. What awaits them is this green harridan who is actually pretty easy to overpower.



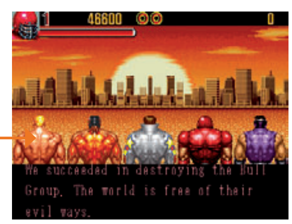
SCREEN 2
And so our hero must do battle with one of the ugliest end-of-game guardians in a videogame; a fat man with the head of a pig; or is it a bipedal pig with questionable dress sense? Whatever it is, it will smother you with sweat.



SCREEN 3
After much groaning and grabbing, our American footballer is the victor and throws his hands triumphantly in the air. 'Those starving children in that fictional orphanage in Mexico will eat well tonight,' he screams jubilantly.



SCREEN 4
With the Bull Group destroyed, our hero is quickly joined by the rest of his spandex-wearing chums. In a disco, they would almost pass as the Village People, but sorely lacking their sense of music timing and a guy dressed as a cowboy.



SCREEN 5
A touching final shot sees our boys marching confidently across the water towards a city. We take from this image that the game depicts its five heroes as being on a mission from God – like The Blues Brothers, if they were wrestlers…